



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

A report on

**Ysgol Hafod Lon
Parc Busnes Eryri
Penrhyndeudraeth
Gwynedd
LL48 6LD**

Date of inspection: February 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Hafod Lon

Ysgol Hafod Lon is a special day school that is situated on the outskirts of the village of Penrhyndeudraeth. It is one of two special schools that are maintained by Gwynedd local authority. Nearly all pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an individual education plan. The school provides for a wide range of additional learning needs, including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

There are currently 110 pupils between 3 and 19 years old on roll. Most pupils come from the Meirionnydd and Dwyfor area and a very few come from the Arfon area and nearby local authorities. Around half the pupils speak Welsh at home. Approximately 36% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Very few pupils are looked after by the local authority.

Since the last inspection, the school has moved to a new site. During the last fifteen months, pupil numbers have increased significantly. This means that there has also been an increase in the number of staff who work at the school and, during the last two years, the school has developed a new leadership structure.

Ysgol Hafod Lon is currently a lead creative school that is working with creative practitioners.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2004. The school was last inspected in December 2010.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

During their time at the school, most pupils at Hafod Lon make sound progress from their starting points and develop beneficial skills to prepare them for adult life. The progress that most pupils make in using the Welsh language is an exceptional feature. Many strive to communicate in Welsh with their peers, staff and visitors.

Pupils' standards of wellbeing at Hafod Lon are robustly good, and most have very positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils develop as respectful and proud citizens who communicate eloquently with staff, visitors and members of the community. Many pupils participate actively in school life and are keen to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities across the school.

All members of staff have an extremely positive, supportive and close relationship with their pupils and know their needs, personalities and talents well.

Overall, the quality of teaching at Ysgol Hafod Lon is adequate and needs improvement.

The school has had a new leadership structure since September 2016 to meet the requirements of a larger school on a new site. However, this structure has not yet been embedded in full and, as a result, quality assurance processes have not matured. Leaders do not currently ensure that provision and teaching are consistent enough across the school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Raise pupils' standards of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school, in line with their needs
- R2 Develop a strategic plan for literacy, numeracy and ICT provision in order to ensure that pupils build on their previous skills as they move through the school
- R3 Ensure consistency in teaching and share best practice across the school
- R4 Strengthen the self-evaluation and quality improvement process so that leaders have a rigorous knowledge of the areas for improvement and plan purposefully for whole-school improvement
- R5 Address the health and safety issues that were raised during the inspection

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at the school, most pupils make strong progress from their starting points and develop beneficial skills to prepare them for adult life. As a result, nearly all pupils move on to college, further training or a suitable placement.

Many pupils make sound progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills in the classroom and while working and playing together. The progress that most pupils make in using the Welsh language is an exceptional feature. Although around half the pupils come from non-Welsh-speaking homes, nearly all show a strong level of understanding of the Welsh language by the end of their time at the school. Many strive to communicate in Welsh with their peers, staff and visitors.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that are achieved by the school's pupils with national averages or analyse trends in overall performance over time, due to the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. There is no significant difference between the performance of all pupils and the performance of boys and girls, pupils who are eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.

In lessons and around the school, many pupils listen carefully and respectfully to teachers, support staff and their fellow pupils. They show a high level of tolerance and persistence when waiting their turn while their peers contribute to the lesson. Most pupils across the school follow instructions readily and respond positively to teachers and support staff.

Many pupils make positive progress in developing independent skills, for example when practising personal skills such as collecting physical education clothes for the lesson, swimming independently at the leisure centre, and following and adhering to rules around the school and in the community.

Over time, many pupils develop various communication skills successfully. Many pupils are positive when expressing feelings or offering ideas. Although a few are reluctant to extend their responses, many speak clearly and confidently when presenting information about themselves and describing their feelings. More able pupils explain facts and processes skilfully, such as the rain cycle. Many pupils, particular the youngest, use a beneficial picture exchange system to communicate easily with their peers during circle time and break time. Many pupils welcome visitors to the school respectfully and show an interest and an enthusiastic willingness to speak to them.

Pupils develop reading skills successfully, in line with their abilities and needs. A majority are able to follow simple instructions, find facts correctly and put sentences or pictures in a sensible order appropriately. Many older pupils read confidently when discussing what they read. A majority show a good level of enjoyment when reading books and online articles.

Many pupils' writing skills are developing appropriately. Many pupils in the foundation phase make suitable progress in using tablet computers to recognise letters and over-write basic words. A minority of older pupils improve their writing skills purposefully to include subject vocabulary and correct facts when writing independently.

When they are given an opportunity, many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their numeracy skills, and use them effectively in their mathematics lessons. They use units of measurement and weight successfully when calculating, for example by identifying objects or fluids that are heavier or lighter than each other, and coming to the correct conclusions when counting and subtracting. Many older pupils make beneficial use of personal information, such as height, to produce graphs and calculate averages. In line with their ability, many pupils make beneficial use of their numeracy skills in other situations outside mathematics lessons. For example, in language lessons, older pupils develop their calculation skills well when analysing periods in a football match.

Overall, a majority of pupils develop their ICT skills appropriately. However, across the school, most pupils do not develop their understanding of the basics of e-safety soundly enough.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils' standards of wellbeing at Ysgol Hafod Lon are robustly good, and most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Nearly all pupils develop valuable personal skills and beneficial strategies to respond enthusiastically to work and activities.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if they are concerned. They treat each other with respect and develop strong relationships with members of staff and their peers. As a result, pupils develop as respectful and proud citizens who communicate eloquently with staff, visitors and members of the community.

Many pupils settle quickly to work, concentrate well when following instructions, and persevere diligently. On the whole, pupils who need more instructions and guidance in relation to their behaviour and concentration, respond very positively to support.

Most pupils are welcoming, polite and willing to share their experiences about the school and their achievements, for example about their work with Cwmni Llon business and enterprise. Their enthusiasm makes a valuable contribution to the supportive environment across the school. Nearly all pupils make sound progress in their social and communication skills, and build successfully on these skills as they move through the school from one stage to the next.

Many pupils develop valuable musical and performance skills in their music lessons and when taking part in wider beneficial projects, for example with a local male voice choir and other schools in the catchment area. By participating in a concert in the community with a local choir, pupils show high standards of self-confidence and also use their creative skills effectively when performing publicly. Many pupils represent the school in musical competitions and experience success in eisteddfodau nationally.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and take part in physical exercise activities enthusiastically, in line with their needs. They use the outdoor play equipment confidently during lunchtime and break time, and take part in sports competitions, such as football.

Many pupils benefit significantly from taking part in a wide range of useful therapeutic interventions, such as music therapy, rebounding therapy and hydrotherapy.

Many pupils play an active part in school life. They undertake leadership roles and responsibilities enthusiastically, such as being prefects, members of the school council or eco committee. They have made a valuable contribution to the new building's outdoor environment by planning jointly with architects to create a multipurpose area for sports.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching at Ysgol Hafod Lon is adequate and needs improvement.

The headteacher, teachers and the rest of the staff have an extremely positive, supportive and close relationship with pupils and know their personalities and talents well.

In lessons and at other times, teachers and support staff deal very effectively with pupils if and when challenging situations arise. Overall, teachers distribute suitable responsibilities to support staff and, in most cases, they provide support to individual pupils and small groups. This has a positive effect on pupils' development, progress and wellbeing.

Overall, teachers plan and organise activities that are of interest to pupils and ensure a good level of engagement and participation. Lesson aims and objectives are clear and teachers make effective use of purposeful digital resources, and produce attractive learning resources.

A majority of teachers plan tasks and activities carefully to develop their pupils' skills. A majority have appropriate expectations of them, and the level of challenge for pupils is suitable. However, in a minority of cases, shortcomings in planning mean that a few pupils are too passive or do not achieve as well as they could.

Overall, a majority of teachers use a suitable range of varied teaching strategies to ensure that pupils make progress and contribute productively to the lesson. However, in a few lessons, the pace is too slow and a few teachers spend too much time presenting and do not ensure that pupils contribute enough to activities.

Many teachers instruct and explain clearly, and a majority model answers for pupils appropriately. However, the way in which teachers use questions to ensure understanding and to move learning forward is too varied. In the best examples, teachers use questioning purposefully to ensure all pupils' engagement, check their understanding and develop their thinking skills and creativity. They present a series of swift and purposeful questions that encourage all pupils to participate. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not adapt questions carefully enough or include all pupils when questioning. As a result, pupils in these lessons do not contribute as well as they could.

Most teachers praise pupils' efforts and progress appropriately and regularly. A few teachers make very beneficial use of pupils' mistakes to explain further and facilitate their understanding. Although most teachers provide valuable written feedback on pupils' work, they do not always include beneficial comments on how to improve their work.

The school succeeds in providing a suitable curriculum that builds purposefully on many pupils' learning. However, the curriculum is too limited to meet a few pupils' needs. The school provides a suitable range of beneficial experiences for older pupils, which include opportunities such as work experience and placements in community support projects. Overall, learning pathways are tailored appropriately to meet the needs and aspirations of post-16 pupils. Although the school provides a range of suitable qualifications for older pupils, there is a lack of variety, particularly for more able pupils.

The school enriches the curriculum successfully by providing a varied range of activities, visits and residential trips. For example, the residential trip to the Urdd activity centre helps pupils to practice their communication skills. The school provides valuable opportunities to promote pupils' bilingualism. As a result, it is successful in ensuring that many pupils communicate confidently in Welsh and English, in line with their abilities and needs.

Overall, teachers incorporate the requirements of the literacy, numeracy and digital competence frameworks appropriately in their termly schemes of work. As a result, these skills are reinforced and developed suitably in a majority of subjects across the curriculum. However, the school does not have strategic enough plans to ensure progression in pupils' skills in order for them to build on their previous learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has robust systems for identifying pupils' learning needs from their starting points. Data is used appropriately to evaluate individual pupils' progress, plan the next steps in their learning and provide further support. As a result, teachers and support staff provide useful specific support programmes in order to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress in their learning and wellbeing. Pupils have detailed individual plans that identify specific targets and strategies that help staff to meet their learning needs. The school ensures that external specialists enrich provision, particularly when pupils do not meet the targets that have been set for them. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement and wellbeing.

The school shares comprehensive information with parents about the learning experiences that pupils receive and, overall, provide beneficial information about progress. The school has a successful relationship with parents and has established a range of effective communication methods with them. This helps parents to support their children and raise any issues that could affect their child's progress. For example, diaries between the home and school include important information about what pupils have achieved during the day and at home.

The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively through the curriculum, assemblies and the creative arts. There are useful opportunities for pupils to identify the difference between right and wrong, and reflect on their feelings and beliefs. While studying and learning about other traditions, such as the Chinese New Year, pupils learn about different cultures.

Lively activities to promote artistic and expressive skills have been established at the school. The school has held a successful musical show and worked with a local school to create a compact disc of songs to promote signing as a method of communication. The school places importance on developing its pupils' entrepreneurship. Various businesses within the school foster independence and effective co-operation between pupils.

The school has successful strategies in order to ensure that pupils' attendance is consistently good. Close co-operation between the school, the health service and a team of specialist therapists ensures that specialist appointments for pupils with profound and complex medical difficulties are held on the school's site. There is a variety of effective specialist interventions for pupils with behavioural needs. Over time, they have helped these pupils successfully to develop their social and personal skills.

The school has robust procedures to promote eating and drinking healthily. On the whole, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. However, a few issues relating to health and safety were brought to the school's attention during the inspection.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The school has had a new leadership structure since September 2016 to meet the requirements of a larger school on a new site. Over the last two years, the governors, senior management team and staff have worked together conscientiously in order to lead the school through a period of significant change. As a result, pupils and staff have settled smoothly in their new building since November 2016.

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on developing the school to become an inclusive educational community that promotes wellbeing and nurtures all pupils to their full potential. She shares this vision successfully with pupils, staff, parents and governors, and ensures that the school's motto 'Chwerthin â'n Gilydd, Chwarae â'n Gilydd, Dysgu â'n Gilydd' (Laugh Together, Play Together, Learn Together) permeates throughout the school's work.

All staff have up-to-date job descriptions that identify their responsibilities appropriately. The senior management team's responsibilities have been reviewed recently, but they have not yet embedded in full. Recent changes, restructuring leadership responsibilities and a significant increase in the number of staff and pupils mean that the senior management team have implemented a number of new procedures. However, they have not yet focused incisively enough on monitoring consistency and the effect of the procedures. As a result, the school has not addressed the inconsistencies across the school in full, for example in the planning to develop pupils' skills, and teaching.

The headteacher has regular meetings with staff to discuss aspects of the school's work and share information. Meetings focus appropriately on the school's priorities and improvement plan. This contributes purposefully towards developing staff's understanding of their responsibilities and their contribution towards developing the school's priorities.

On the whole, the school's performance management procedures are suitable. The school provides opportunities to promote the staff's professional development appropriately through a specific training programme, in line with the school's priorities for improvement. For example, this year, the school is providing a series of intensive training sessions for all members of staff on a range of methods to develop pupils' communication skills. This means that staff are more confident and consistent in their methods of developing pupils' communication skills across the school. However, the professional development programme does not provide enough opportunities for staff to observe best practice within the school or in other similar schools.

The school has established appropriate quality assurance activities over time. However, these procedures are not embedded fully in all aspects of the school's work. Overall, leaders make suitable use of a range of first-hand evidence, including lesson observations and the views of pupils, parents and staff through regular questionnaires. The self-evaluation report is a detailed document that, on the whole, provides an appropriate picture of the school's strengths and identifies many areas for development. Although arrangements for analysing and using data are being developed, they do not yet consider progress over time effectively enough to identify patterns in performance. In addition, there are not effective enough arrangements to use information from lesson observations and learning walks to form a judgement on pupils' standards and progress in lessons.

The senior management team uses information from the self-evaluation report appropriately in order to set its priorities for improvement. In general, priorities for improvement are suitable and focus on promoting wellbeing, enriching the learning experiences of pupils with profound difficulties, and supporting parents. However, the school has not identified a few important areas for improvement, such as ensuring consistency in teaching and planning for skills.

The school has robust financial arrangements and expenditure links suitably with the school's priorities. The headteacher and governing body monitor the budget carefully. Effective use is made of the school improvement grant and pupil development grant in order to promote pupils' wellbeing and inclusion. This includes employing a specialist behaviour therapist and supporting specific educational programmes. However, processes to measure the effect of all expenditure are not embedded.

The governors are very supportive of the school's work. Many visit the school regularly and lead on priorities in the improvement plan. This means that they have a beneficial understanding of pupils' needs and of the school's day-to-day work. However, the role of governors as critical friends in order to hold leaders to account is developing gradually.

Copies of the report

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

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

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

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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