



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

A report on

**Ysgol Heulfan
Sunny View
Off First Avenue
Gwersyllt
Wrexham
LL11 4HS**

Date of inspection: February 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Heulfan

Ysgol Heulfan is in Gwersyllt, in Wrexham local authority. There are around 370 pupils on roll, aged between 3 and 11 years, including 43 nursery children who attend on a part-time basis. There are five single-age and seven mixed-age classes in the school. The school also has a resourced provision called Y Canol, comprising four classes for 34 pupils aged between 3 and 14 years with PMLD. There is an additional provision for early years pupils, most of whom have non-verbal ASD. Many of these pupils travel from outside the school's traditional catchment area.

The rolling average for the past three years means that about 31% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average (19%).

Most pupils are of white British ethnicity and speak English. Around 7% of pupils speak English as a second language and are developing competence in English. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school identifies around 25% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is higher than the national average (21%).

The headteacher took up her post in January 2006. The school's last inspection was in November 2009.

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

Ysgol Heulfan is an exceptionally caring and inclusive school. The headteacher and senior leaders are highly effective and provide inspirational leadership. As a result, almost all pupils make strong progress, often from very low starting points and those that are more able achieve highly. The progress that many pupils make in developing their literacy skills is a particularly strong feature of the school's success. Nearly all pupils are courteous and their behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. They have admirable attitudes to their learning and display high levels of independence and resilience.

The overall quality of teaching is good although there are examples of excellent practice in many classes. All staff provide a rich, imaginative and stimulating curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils well. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is excellent. The high levels of care, support and guidance that staff provide throughout the school is remarkable. As a result, pupils thrive, and feel safe and valued.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that feedback by teachers consistently reflects what pupils need to do to improve their work
- R2 Provide all key stage 2 pupils with an appropriate balance of written and mental mathematical work to support their numeracy skills

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to:

1. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs
2. Promoting the rapid development of pupils' speaking and listening skills for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Many pupils enter the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those expected of pupils of that age, particularly their language skills. However, almost all make strong progress and pupils that are more able achieve highly. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs respond well to the support they receive and achieve well. In Y Canol, nearly all pupils benefit greatly from specialised care and support and make good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

The rapid progress that most pupils make in developing their oracy and literacy skills is outstanding. Through the foundation phase, they speak increasingly clearly and confidently, using an expanding vocabulary. In Y Canol, nearly all pupils make good progress, such as when responding to instructions. Most pupils in key stage 2 continue to develop their speaking skills well, so that by Year 6, they are confident and articulate, using mature vocabulary to express their thoughts clearly.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make very strong progress in developing their reading skills. They use strategies such as phonic decoding and picture cues confidently to assist their understanding of the texts. Most pupils in key stage 2 read fluently and expressively. Pupils that are more able develop higher-order reading skills, such as inference, well. This enables them to gather more information from the text than is actually explicit.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils recall previous learning well and apply their literacy skills highly effectively across the curriculum. In the foundation phase, pupils write neat letters to the Three Little Pigs and make lists of items to take on holiday. Most punctuate correctly and pupils that are more able use paragraphs and speech marks appropriately. Many make interesting vocabulary choices to enrich their writing. For example, when advertising grandmother's house, they describe a '*gleaming, sparkling kitchen*'. In Y Canol, most pupils develop mark-making skills appropriately. Almost all pupils in key stage 2 develop their writing skills very well. By Year 6, most write to a high standard for a broad range of purposes, adapting their style well to suit their intended audience. For example, they recount their visit to a local airport, retell myths and write moving poetry about Anne Frank. Most vary sentence structures competently when writing newspaper reports about the battle of Bosworth. Many pupils choose their words effectively. For example, they write that '*Pandora ran her trembling finger over the box's wooden lid. Her pale finger found the metal of the clasp and ...*'.

Throughout the foundation phase, most pupils develop a sound understanding of number. They solve problems systematically and apply their numeracy skills effectively in their topics through reading clock faces and thermometer scales, making tally charts and drawing pictograms. In Y Canol, nearly all pupils take small but significant steps towards developing early mathematical concepts, such as identifying sets of shapes from a larger set. Many pupils in key stage 2 work methodically in mathematics and calculate accurately, applying their numeracy skills well in many contexts. For example, in science, they draw accurate graphs that

show which trainers give the best grip. Most pupils are beginning to have rapid recall of times tables and other number facts.

Throughout the school, most pupils make very strong progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Many in the foundation phase use word-processing software confidently to write letters to Goldilocks. They use paint packages competently and direct programmable toys around a prescribed course correctly. In key stage 2, most pupils use educational and commercial software to present their work clearly, combining text and images in eye-catching ways. They organise information in databases and write spreadsheet formulae that calculate the perimeters and areas of shapes.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in acquiring a Welsh vocabulary relating to numbers, colours and feelings. They respond well to their teachers' instructions and use simple sentence patterns. In key stage 2, many pupils read Welsh texts with clear pronunciation. They speak clearly and write independently in the past tense about visits to the seaside. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have a positive attitude to the Welsh language and use their knowledge of vocabulary and sentence patterns to engage in simple conversations successfully.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils behave admirably and show exemplary attitudes towards one another. One of the school's many strengths is the heart-warming way in which mainstream pupils relate to their peers in Y Canol as equals and view them very much as part of their school family. They are very considerate, sensitive and supportive of these pupils, for example when they help at break times or when using sign language to communicate with each other.

Nearly all pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning and most concentrate well in lessons for commendably long periods. They demonstrate high levels of resilience, particularly when working independently at tasks of their own choosing. Foundation phase pupils persevere in writing sentences linked to stories correctly, while key stage 2 pupils refine their sketch work in the style of famous artists and focus meticulously when creating paintings of trees in a pointillist style using cotton buds. Another strong feature of pupils' attitudes is the way many choose to take on mathematical or scientific challenges in the various learning zones, applying imagination and curiosity to their problem solving.

The positive way in which all pupils co-operate closely in lessons and around the school is a notable feature. They work diligently together on a wide range of projects. For example, groups of key stage 2 pupils collaborate to produce high quality digital presentations on how and what to recycle, while different age groups share ideas during 'Super Learning Days'.

Nearly all pupils feel very well cared for, valued and protected while at school. They are comfortable in sharing personal problems with staff because their professional relationships with them are so strong. They understand how to keep safe in different contexts. For example, they demonstrate how to use tools such as saws and chisels safely when making wooden owls, and know how to respond appropriately to cyber bullying.

Most pupils have a mature understanding of how to keep healthy through maintaining a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. Nearly all pupils in Year 6 know that technology helps them to learn but that it is also unhealthy to play video games for long periods. Most pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as dancing, and compete regularly at local sports events. This enhances their understanding of healthy living successfully.

Many pupils contribute positively to decisions about what and how they will learn in their topic work. They are eager to participate in the various school councils and undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. They contribute well to improving school life and make sensible suggestions, for example, regarding the installation of lockers and making better use of play equipment during break times. Most pupils across the school are knowledgeable about how to live sustainably through composting waste, keeping a close eye on energy use and planting flowers, shrubs and herbs in the school grounds.

Most pupils develop their social and life skills well. Pupils from key stage 2 use money confidently by regularly buy specific items in the local shop and calculating the cost and change, while mainstream pupils with additional learning needs develop a very solid understanding of time by visiting local bus stops and the train station to view their timetables. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop a good understanding of business strategies and how to generate income through the activities of the 'money-makers' and organising fundraising events such as fetes, for example. Pupils donate generously to various local and national charities. Consequently, most are developing well as principled and responsible individuals.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The overall quality of teaching is good and there are very strong examples of high quality teaching in many foundation phase classes. They enthuse pupils and make work fun by dressing in hats or in chef's whites. An exceptional feature of the school's work is the effective working relationships that exist between staff and pupils, where everyone treats each other with mutual respect. This allows teachers and support staff to manage pupils' behaviour effectively and results in a positive, engaging and focused learning environment for them. Staff ensure that learning experiences build on pupils' previous knowledge and skills successfully.

In many classes, teachers give pupils helpful oral feedback on their work and use questioning skilfully to encourage them to enhance their responses. This helps pupils to understand new ideas clearly, and enables staff to judge their understanding of new concepts well. Many teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to consider their own performance and that of others. However, in key stage 2, teachers' written comments refer more to what pupils have done well and do not indicate consistently what they need to do to improve their work. Staff use on-going assessments well to inform their planning.

Staff provide pupils with a rich, broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the needs of learners effectively. They ensure that all pupils contribute to what and how they learn by taking note of their suggestions at the beginning of, and during, topics. This ensures that pupils take ownership of their learning. Teachers plan interesting activities that make good use of real-life learning opportunities and include an

extensive range of topics. For example, when making porridge for the three bears, foundation phase pupils bought fresh supplies from the local shop. The school makes regular visits to the community and welcomes interesting visitors such as a wartime evacuee to share their experiences with the pupils. This brings learning to life for the pupils. .

In the foundation phase, many staff provide pupils with imaginative first hand learning experiences, often dressing in character to engage their enthusiasm. For example, they dress as Goldilocks while pupils search for paw prints in order to locate the three bears. This supports the foundation phase philosophy well. In key stage 2, teachers establish engaging learning zones, which enable all pupils to apply their independent learning skills successfully.

Throughout the school, teachers develop pupils' skills in oracy and literacy very effectively. They use questioning skilfully to elicit appropriate responses about characters in a story, for example. They group pupils thoughtfully to encourage older pupils to use their communication skills specifically to support the learning of younger ones. As a result, most pupils apply their literacy skills confidently through topic work in many interesting ways. In upper key stage 2, staff provide many pupils with opportunities to write and perform poetry about the Second World War eloquently.

In the foundation phase, teachers provide pupils with a wide range of interesting activities that promote their mathematical development well. For example, in their class shops Year 1 and 2 pupils buy and sell objects and calculate the amount of change they should expect confidently. However, in key stage 2, the planning of mathematics does not always provide all pupils with an appropriate balance of written and mental work. As a result, many pupils' ability to perform rapid mental calculations is not fully developed.

The school provides pupils with effective opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills confidently. It is responding well to the principles of the digital competence framework by enabling them to develop successfully a wide range of communication and modelling skills on a variety of computers.

The school's commitment to promoting pupils' Welsh language skills is very good. There are many beneficial opportunities for all pupils to speak and write in Welsh. Teachers plan effectively to promote Welsh culture and the history of Wales well. For example, pupils in key stage 2 make comparisons between European countries and Wales.

In mainstream classes, learning experiences stimulate and engage pupils with additional learning needs very well. Nearly all teachers and support staff move pupils' learning forwards successfully. Staff in Y Canol make an outstanding contribution by tailoring pupils' learning experiences expertly to meet their individual needs. Here, the combination of staff knowledge and skills to create informative, personalised learning is exceptional.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is characterised by the warm, very supportive working relationships that exist between staff and pupils. As a result, it is an exceptionally caring and inclusive community.

Staff carefully track the progress of pupils on their journey through school. This gives teachers a clear picture of those pupils who need additional support in literacy, numeracy and emotional areas. The school meets the needs of these pupils very successfully. For example, staff use various therapies effectively to help vulnerable pupils come to terms with their anxieties and build their confidence and resilience.

Individual development plans for all pupils with additional learning needs are very clear. They contain specific and measurable targets drawn up in discussion with pupils and parents. This inclusive approach means that timely interventions help pupils overcome learning difficulties. Staff in the early years classes identify pupils who need extra support in speech and language quickly and support them successfully by using sign language and other approaches. Pupils with additional learning needs in Years 5 and 6 respond well to daily check-ins and booster lessons, which have a strong focus on applying literacy and numeracy skills in everyday life.

Staff in Y Canol provide high levels of care and support for pupils. For instance, they provide regular physiotherapy and hydrotherapy to meet pupils' physical needs. The school nurse and other staff work effectively with mainstream colleagues and a range of specialist services to sustain pupils' all-round progress. As a result, pupils with medical and other additional needs are cared for successfully.

A major strength of the school is how well staff know their pupils and families. This is well illustrated in the colourful individual pen profiles drawn up through discussions between teachers and pupils. These convey to parents a vivid picture of the individual interests, strengths and next steps for their children. As a result, the school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress. Parents also contribute actively to the life of the school. For instance, parents of children in the resource unit and Y Canol learn sign language and work alongside their pupils to create jewellery and clothes for a fashion show, where staff pose as paparazzi eager to snap photos of the models.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development successfully by providing them with appropriate opportunities to reflect on the wonders of the natural world and share their experiences in assemblies. Staff in Y Canol and mainstream classes liaise closely to ensure that there is consistency in what adults expect of pupils. As a result, there is a calm, positive atmosphere around the school. The school council contributes well to this by providing useful feedback on how to improve learning, such as by spending more time on living explorers in their topic on 'Explorers and Adventurers'.

The school promotes healthy eating and drinking effectively through cooking classes and extra-curricular activities such as sports, dance and gardening clubs. Staff expect pupils to exercise vigorously in physical education lessons that stretch both bodies and minds.

The school nurtures the development of pupils' personal and social skills very well. Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply life-skills beyond the school gates, such as when pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 check bus and train times and book a local taxi for a trip to Wrexham.

In all classes, staff spark pupils' imaginations and creativity well. For example, they encourage foundation phase pupils to make pictures of characters such as Red Riding Hood using various media enthusiastically, while key stage 2 pupils relish constructing fidget spinners to relieve stress. The school promotes pupils' awareness of Welsh history and culture appropriately, for example by visiting local sites and comparing life in Wales with France, Spain and Italy. Through such projects, there are good opportunities for pupils to learn about aspects of other cultures, such as European art. Through 'Books of Excellence' and learning walls, staff provide very clear guidance to pupils on what high quality work looks like across the curriculum.

The school ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe while working outdoors in the woodland or using the internet, for example. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are appropriate and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and highly effective. She has a clear vision for the school that promotes the happiness, wellbeing and achievement of all pupils extremely well. She is ably supported by three assistant headteachers. Together, they succeed in establishing a caring, inclusive ethos in which pupils can thrive.

Governors support the work of the school enthusiastically and many visit regularly. The headteacher's detailed reports keep them well informed. They are beginning to contribute to self-evaluation procedures through learning walks alongside school councillors. However, their role in challenging the school to improve and in strategic planning is less well developed.

School leaders are ambitious and imaginative in implementing change and improving standards of teaching and learning across the school. For example, having identified the need to improve writing through the rigorous self-evaluation process, leaders planned a programme of activities, beginning with a whole-school visit to a local airport. The pupils' work that resulted from this is evidence that writing improved across all year groups.

School improvement plans are detailed and focus well on the outcome of the school's robust self-evaluation activities. Targets focus clearly on developing standards in literacy and numeracy and on reducing the impact of poverty on attainment. For example, the school introduced a structured phonics programme into the foundation phase in 2015 to improve pupils' reading. As a result, the standard of reading improved measurably in a relatively short space of time.

Leaders develop innovative teaching and learning strategies to meet needs and interests of pupils. For example, having identified that pupils entering key stage 2 were independent with an increasing capacity to direct their own learning, the school introduced 'learning zones'. These enable pupils to develop their ability to work independently and give them ownership of their learning.

Arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities among the staff support school improvement successfully. For example, middle leaders monitor progress towards school improvement targets and evaluate pupil attainment data rigorously and this informs school planning.

All staff understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to bringing about school improvement. Performance management arrangements for all staff align closely with school improvement priorities. The school's support for the professional development of staff is outstanding. This helps to build the school's capacity for continuous improvement. For example, the very effective induction and mentoring arrangements for staff in Y Canol enable the team to provide a very high quality of support for staff and the pupils in their care.

Staff benefit from collaborating with local schools. For example, teachers throughout the school work together to develop their skills and share good practice in literacy and mathematics, which has resulted in a positive and open culture of improvement.

The school plays a significant role in raising aspirations for pupils and their families. The partnership and trust between school and home is a substantial strength, and the school is often the first point of contact for parents with worries that are unrelated to their child's education. For example, the extensive work that the school has done to engage parents through family and community engagement has helped parents have a better understanding of their child's school. Families appreciate coming into the school to learn basic sign language and share in their child's learning at events such as learning walks and the fashion day.

The school has enough qualified teachers and teaching assistants who contribute very well towards improving standards, wellbeing and pupil outcomes, particularly for those pupils who are vulnerable or who have additional needs. There are innovative arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers.

Senior leaders have a sound understanding of the school's finances. They use the budget well to support improvements and maintain high standards in the main school and the resourced provisions. For example, the purchase of additional computer tablets has contributed strongly to improvements in pupils' ICT skills.

The school makes efficient use of its pupil development grant to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and enables them to make good progress from their starting points. It subsidises educational visits to interesting places and funds the employment of teaching assistants for forest school and accelerated learning support. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and outcomes.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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