



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

A report on

**Ysgol Llanhari
Llanhari
Pontyclun
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF72 9XE**

Date of inspection: October 2017

by

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

About Ysgol Llanhari

In September 2012, Ysgol Llanhari was expanded to provide education for pupils from three to nineteen years old. The school has not yet reached its full capacity, and this year it has classes from Year 1 to Year 5, and Year 7 to Year 13. It has 631 pupils in total, namely 412 in the secondary department, including 63 sixth-form students, and 107 pupils in the primary department.

The school is situated in the village of Llanhari. The secondary department admits pupils from a wide area, which includes Tonyrefail, Gilfach Goch, Miskin, Llanharan, Pencoed and Llantrisant. The primary department admits pupils from the surrounding villages, including Llanhari, Pontyclun and Talbot Green.

Nearly all pupils are of white ethnicity. Forty-one per cent (41%) come from Welsh speaking homes, but 90% of pupils are fluent Welsh speakers. Approximately 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is significantly lower than the national averages for secondary and primary schools. Nine per cent of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is lower than the national average. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The senior leadership team includes the headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

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

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 Llanhari provides stimulating and interesting experiences for its pupils to ensure that they develop as civilised and knowledgeable citizens. There is a constructive working relationship between staff and pupils and, in general, pupils enjoy their time at the school very much. The school has a Welsh and homely atmosphere which contributes to a strong sense of community. The school provides a wide range of beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop culturally, physically and creatively. Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work, and most make strong academic and social progress during their time at the school. The school is led skilfully by the headteacher and the senior leadership team, and the quality of teaching is consistently good.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the achievement of more able pupils in all key stages
- R2 Introduce a wider range of opportunities for pupils to write at length in key stage 2
- R3 Plan opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their higher order information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R4 Formalise the processes of setting and reviewing targets for pupils with additional learning needs in the secondary department
- R5 Ensure that leaders evaluate the school's progress against similar schools

What happens next

Not in follow-up activity

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, most pupils' basic skills at least correspond to what is expected for their age. As they move through the school, most make strong progress.

In the primary department, most pupils' oral Welsh skills develop at a very early stage. They foster a wide vocabulary and use it meaningfully when discussing their feelings and ideas. Most are keen to express an opinion, give reasons and offer sensible answers to questions. In the secondary department, many pupils have sound communication skills. They express themselves clearly by using extended vocabulary and correct syntax. A minority speak polished Welsh and speak eloquently. In the sixth form, many pupils have very strong linguistic skills, which enable them to discuss profound issues in a sophisticated manner, for example as they investigate the structure of nucleic acids. Most pupils listen respectfully to each other's ideas and discuss them maturely, for example when considering the mining tragedy in Senghennydd.

In many lessons across the stages, most pupils recall previous learning successfully and build on it beneficially. In these lessons, pupils make strong progress in their skills and subject knowledge.

During their time at the school, many pupils develop strong reading skills. In many lessons, they use these to distil relevant information from various sources. Many pupils read aloud fluently and use relevant expression.

Most primary pupils write thoughtfully and imaginatively, and show a firm grasp of a wide range of writing forms. They use paragraphs to present their work methodically and give good consideration to the audience. Many pupils produce interesting and imaginative pieces of writing, for example when discussing an apple's journey through the body. However, they do not write extensively enough across the curriculum. In the secondary department, in many subjects, pupils write at length about a wide range of stimulating topics, such as justifying arguments for and against religion. The most able pupils show strong creative skills, for example when writing a soliloquy imagining themselves as a soldier in the First World War. However, a few pupils make basic grammatical or spelling errors in Welsh and English.

Across the school, many pupils develop a wide range of arithmetical skills and apply them correctly, for example when calculating the rate of deforestation in the Amazon. Many develop their graph drawing skills well by setting sensible scales for axes, plotting data points correctly and choosing lines of best fit to identify patterns in the data. These pupils analyse data thoughtfully and a few offer a range of logical arguments to explain these patterns. However, in the secondary department, a few pupils do not recall basic mathematical concepts correctly, which limits their ability to make progress.

Most pupils develop their creative skills beneficially, for example by designing and creating hats for different occasions and learning how to extemporise in their music

lessons. Most pupils develop their dexterity beneficially, for example when handling lenses and mirrors in their science lessons and developing their ball skills in physical education lessons.

Nearly all pupils use their ICT skills appropriately across the curriculum. However, they do not develop their higher order ICT skills, for example by creating models or more sophisticated charts.

Performance in the level 2 indicator including English or Welsh and mathematics has varied over time, and has been higher than the average performance in similar schools in two of the last three years. Over the same period, performance in the capped points score has been higher than that of similar schools. Overall, pupils make sound progress from one key stage to the next.

The proportion of pupils who gain five GCSEs grade A*-A or equivalent has varied over time, but is generally lower than in similar schools.

The performance of boys and girls over the last three years in the indicators that include five GCSEs grade A*-C and A*-G or equivalent compares favourably with that of similar schools. The proportion of girls who gain five GCSEs grade A*-A or equivalent is higher than the average for similar schools. However, boys' outcomes in this measure have been below the average for similar schools in two of the last three years.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils continue in education, training or employment.

Pupils make mixed progress in their chosen subjects in the sixth form. Over time, pupils' performance in the level 3 threshold, the wider points score, the proportion of pupils who gain three grades A*-A or equivalent and the proportion who gain three grades A*-C are generally lower than in similar schools. However, pupils make good progress considering their performance in key stage 4. In general, many pupils develop their ability to deal with complex issues skilfully while following their courses.

In general, pupils with additional learning needs make sound progress in their linguistic and arithmetical skills.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils play a full role in creating a strong sense of community within the school. Most are well-behaved and treat their teachers, visitors and peers with respect. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and most believe that the school deals effectively with the rare cases of bullying. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school.

The school council is an active group that undertakes leadership roles effectively. It has had a positive influence on school life, for example by contributing to the anti-bullying policy and improving the selection of healthy foods that are available in the canteen. Many other groups, such as the 'Eco-warriors', the children's rights groups and the 'digital wizards' also make a beneficial contribution to the school's work. The 'dreigiau doeth' ('wise dragons') group is beginning to have a positive effect on the pupils' social use of the Welsh language. Members of the sixth form conduct beneficial sessions where the school's younger pupils are able to call in to discuss anything that is worrying them.

Many pupils understand clearly the importance of eating healthily. A majority take part in beneficial extra-curricular activities, which include dance and sports clubs and a dodgeball club that is run by the sixth form. All pupils in the primary department aim to walk or run a mile every day.

Nearly all pupils show a positive attitude towards their work and persevere with their tasks successfully. They are well-motivated and work constructively, both independently and with their peers. Many show persistence when persevering with difficult tasks. Most develop very strong interpersonal skills during their time at the school.

Many pupils take part enthusiastically in beneficial cultural activities, for example by competing in the Urdd Eisteddfod and performing in school shows.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching at the school is good.

In nearly all lessons, teachers are good language models. They foster a very good working relationship with pupils. In many cases, there is detailed planning and interesting activities that ensure consistent progress. In many subjects, teachers support pupils to develop their communication skills by offering useful expressions or phrases for them to emulate or adapt. These teachers provide rigorous and interesting explanations to extend pupils' subject knowledge. Many of these lessons have a lively tempo and teachers have high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and achievement. In most lessons, teachers develop pupils' independence successfully by immersing them in beneficial routines. For example, they insist that pupils use a dictionary instead of asking for a translation, or that they fetch a support pack rather than asking for basic instructions.

In a few cases, there is inspirational teaching. Teachers show an infectious enthusiasm and plan ambitious and stimulating tasks to encourage pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.

In a few lessons, teachers' presentations are too long, which limits the opportunities for pupils to interact with the teacher or other pupils. In a very few subjects, there are repetitive tasks that limit pupils' ability to respond to unfamiliar situations.

In many lessons, teachers question pupils skilfully to prompt them to extend their responses. In most lessons, teachers circle the classroom watchfully in order to provide constructive oral advice to specific pupils. In many books, teachers provide useful comments for pupils on how to improve their work and give them supporting tasks to improve specific aspects. However, a minority of teachers do not always ensure that pupils complete these tasks.

The school provides an appropriate curriculum that motivates and challenges pupils of all ages. The school works effectively with its partner primary schools to ensure that the secondary curriculum build successfully on pupils' previous learning.

The primary department has responded effectively to the requirements of the literacy and numeracy framework by planning interesting thematic work. As a result, lessons include imaginative experiences for pupils that develop their skills and spark their

curiosity. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils write extensively enough in key stage 2. In key stage 3, provision to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the subjects and within 'skills' sessions is comprehensive. In the primary and secondary departments, there are appropriate opportunities to apply pupils' ICT skills across the subjects. However, planning is not detailed enough to ensure that they develop their higher order ICT skills.

In key stage 4, the school provides a suitable range of academic and occupational courses to meet pupils' needs and abilities. The school offers an appropriate range of courses in the sixth form by working in partnership with another school.

The school provides valuable experiences outside the classroom that support pupils' experiences; for example, extra-curricular visits to places such as the Big Pit in Blaenavon, Cardiff Bay and Pen-y-fan as part of the Brecon Beacons project. In the primary department, the school has planned creatively and considered pupils' views in developing the green area.

The school has an innovative and experimental attitude in terms of developing the curriculum to provide stimulating experiences for pupils to develop their organisational and creative skills, for example by challenging Year 8 pupils to organise and hold a sports day for Years 3 and 4.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has an inclusive, caring and Welsh ethos that promotes a strong sense of community.

There are robust systems to track and monitor pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. Tracking at departmental level is thorough and enables teachers to know exactly which elements pupils need to improve. In general, leaders make effective use of this information in order to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving and provide appropriate interventions for them.

Close working between the welfare officer, the deputy headteacher and the team of attainment standards leaders ensures valuable care for pupils with emotional and social difficulties. A notable example of this is the 'learner athlete' initiative to improve the attendance and attitudes of vulnerable pupils in key stage 3. The school also works productively with external partners in order to support the wellbeing of specific pupils, where necessary.

Arrangements for pupils with additional learning needs in the primary department are thorough and ensure that they receive strong provision. In the secondary department, provision for these pupils is also effective. Personal development plans for pupils with additional learning needs include useful strategies to support them. However, in the secondary department, the school does not review the progress of pupils with additional learning needs against their personal targets formally.

The school plans and provides a comprehensive personal and social education programme that develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes successfully. The contributions of a number of interesting external speakers contribute beneficially to pupils' understanding of a wide range of social issues.

There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and live a healthy lifestyle. There are appropriate arrangements to ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily.

Respecting various cultures and promoting tolerance are effective aspects of the school's culture. There is a clear emphasis on promoting agreed values, and this has a positive influence on pupils' behaviour. The school provides many beneficial opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities and to develop as well-rounded citizens, for example by discussing their ideas with Members of Parliament.

The school communicates effectively with parents in a variety of ways, and the school's use of social media is an obvious strength. Reports for parents are comprehensive, personal and identify the steps that pupils need to take in order to make further progress.

The school has suitable arrangements and policies to prevent and address bullying. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on ensuring high standards by providing rich learning experiences in a Welsh and Welsh-language environment. She shares this vision successfully with pupils, staff, parents and governors. With the support of the rest of the senior leadership team, the headteacher provides strong leadership and a purposeful strategic direction for the school. Staff work closely as a team, and leadership roles and responsibilities are distributed sensibly.

Leaders manage change successfully and support other teachers and staff to break new ground, for example as they prepare for the new curriculum or when using elements of the philosophy of the foundation phase in key stage 2 classes. Staff meet regularly to discuss whole-school issues and focus closely on progress against the school's priorities.

Governors are very supportive of the school and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have useful links with specific departments and a good awareness of the main strengths and areas for improvement. They contribute constructively to improvement plans and deepen their knowledge of standards and provision successfully. As a result, governors have a wide range of knowledge about the school in order to challenge and support it effectively.

The school has a cycle of rigorous self-evaluation and quality monitoring activities that are well-established. As a result, leaders have a rigorous understanding of the school, and this is reflected in the comprehensive self-evaluation report.

Leaders gather valuable evidence directly by observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and analysing data on pupils' performance at the end of relevant key stages. However, the school does not always compare its own performance with that of similar schools rigorously enough. The school seeks the views of pupils, parents and staff regularly and uses this information successfully to produce priorities, for example on teaching, wellbeing and Welshness.

There is a clear link between the self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan. The improvement plan is a lengthy document that prioritises most areas for development that are identified in the self-evaluation report. The plan includes ambitious targets, clear responsibilities, costs and appropriate timescales. It includes sensible actions and success criteria, which are measurable, on the whole. Over time, the school's planning has ensured positive outcomes at the end of key stage 4, good progress in many subjects in the sixth form, and teaching of consistently high quality.

Middle managers produce improvement plans that respond appropriately to school and departmental evaluations. However, the quality of departmental evaluations varies, and a minority do not include enough information about the progress that pupils make in lessons.

The school maintains a very supportive culture to enable all staff to develop professionally. The school responds creatively to the development needs of individual staff and whole-school issues by organising internal training days, sharing good practice and observing and scrutinising work jointly. The school works productively with other schools to develop ideas and share good practice. A notable example of this is the courses that the school organises for the foundation phase to share good practice with Welsh and English-medium primary schools. Performance management arrangements are strong and the objectives of all members of staff correspond well with the school's priorities.

The headteacher and governors manage the budget and resources carefully. They anticipate financial difficulties at an early stage and plan skilfully to cope with potential future risks. They ensure that there is a strong link between decisions on expenditure and the school's strategic priorities. The school makes the most of the accommodation in order to support learning and teaching, particularly in the primary department, where the learning environment is very attractive and stimulating. The school makes beneficial use of grants to support the achievement of the school's most vulnerable pupils.

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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Publication date: 27/12/2017