



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

A report on

**Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy
Ffordd Nebo
Llanrwst
Conwy
LL26 0SD**

Date of inspection: January 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy

Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a bilingual community comprehensive school for 11 to 18-year-old pupils. It is maintained by Conwy local authority. There are 658 pupils on roll, including 137 in the sixth form, which is lower than the figures at the time of the last inspection. The school serves the rural area of the Conwy Valley, which includes the town of Llanrwst. Most pupils come from relatively prosperous areas.

Six point five per cent (6.5%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This figure is lower than the national average of 16.4%.

Nearly all pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. No pupils receive support to learn English as an additional language.

The school admits pupils from the full range of ability. Twenty two point seven per cent (22.7%) of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is similar to the national average. One point one per cent (1.1%) of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is lower than the national average. The school has a unit for pupils with moderate learning needs.

Fifty nine per cent (59%) of pupils come from homes in which either one or both parents speak Welsh, and 88% of pupils study Welsh as a first language.

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 in the language, literacy and communication area of learning and experience.

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

The headteacher's vision and strong support from the rest of the senior leadership team have led to a comprehensive, caring and Welsh ethos. Pupil wellbeing is a strong element at the school. However, overall, leaders do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are able to achieve.

The school offers pupils a host of valuable cultural and physical activities. As a result, many pupils enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes towards learning.

There is a supportive and productive relationship between teachers and pupils. However, in a minority of cases, teaching does not provide enough challenge to pupils, particularly those who are most able. As a result, pupils do not always achieve to the best of their ability.

The school is a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments relating to the curriculum in the languages, literacy and communication area of learning and experience.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
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 Improve standards, including literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R2 Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' use of the Welsh language
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers offer pupils sufficient challenge
- R4 Improve the quality, incisiveness and ambition of self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes
- R5 Ensure that responsibilities are distributed equally within the senior leadership team

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils recall previous learning appropriately and, in a majority of cases, build on this beneficially. A few pupils make very rapid progress in their subject knowledge and skills. However, in a minority of cases, pupils do not make enough progress in these aspects.

Orally, many pupils are able to communicate their ideas clearly in Welsh and English. These pupils discuss their ideas maturely and listen respectfully to the views of others. For example, in their history lessons, they imagine that they are the censor of soldiers' letters during the First World War, and discuss the effect of this on the soldiers, their families and the censors themselves. A majority of pupils develop appropriate general vocabulary and use subject terminology correctly and confidently. In a majority of cases, they give sensible, extended responses to their teachers' questions. However, in a minority of cases, they offer only short, undeveloped responses. In Welsh-medium lessons, pupils discuss with each other and respond to their teachers in English too frequently. This limits their linguistic development and confidence in using the Welsh language.

Most pupils have appropriate reading skills. They gather relevant information successfully from various sources, and a majority are able to analyse texts and come to sensible conclusions. For example, in their geography lessons, pupils read a variety of texts about different landforms to develop ideas about how the 'Green Bridge of Wales' in Pembrokeshire was formed. A few pupils show sound higher order reading skills, for example when synthesising different texts and making inferences. A majority of pupils read aloud confidently with appropriate expression. However, a minority of pupils read hesitantly and pause when they come across unfamiliar words.

In many subjects across the curriculum, pupils produce appropriate extended written work. Many pupils structure their work logically and communicate their ideas clearly. A few show sophisticated creative writing skills, for example when writing a monologue about a factory closing in their Welsh lessons. However, around half of pupils produce written work with too many linguistic errors in Welsh and English. In Welsh-medium lessons, a minority of pupils write in English and a few respond in a mixture of Welsh and English sentences. This prevents these pupils from developing their written Welsh skills.

Many pupils have appropriate numeracy skills and apply them suitably in relevant subjects across the curriculum. For example, they analyse data on the outbreak of cholera in the 19th century in their biology lessons. However, overall, pupils only use the most basic numeracy skills. Usually, they only produce bar charts or complete simple calculations. Many pupils have a tendency to use a calculator when completing simple calculations, for example when dividing by ten, rather than trying to calculate mentally.

Many pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately to complete simple tasks, for example by word processing or creating presentations

in subjects across the curriculum. However, they do not develop their advanced ICT skills, for example by handling spreadsheets or databases, often enough to develop or reinforce these skills.

Many pupils develop their creativity beneficially. For example, they produce artwork, compose, animate and film in response to the title 'Llanrwst on fire' as part of a project in partnership with the local Welsh language initiative.

In the past three years, pupils' performance in key stage 4 in many key indicators is lower than that of similar schools. Performance in the level 2 indicator which includes Welsh or English and mathematics, and the average points score, has declined over the last three years and is consistently lower than in similar schools. The proportion of pupils who gain 5 GCSE A*-A grades or equivalent is notably lower than in other similar schools.

In a majority of cases, the performance of boys and girls in the main indicators has been lower than in similar schools since 2016. Overall, pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress during their time at the school. No pupils have left the school without a qualification since 2016.

The performance of pupils in the sixth form has declined since 2016. The proportion of pupils who gain 3 A*-A grades or equivalent and 3 A*-C grades, in addition to performance in the level 3 threshold and the wider points score, is consistently lower than in other similar schools.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils' wellbeing is a strong aspect of life at Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy. Pupils value the school's community spirit and supportive ethos that derives from it.

Many pupils enjoy attending school. Most extend a warm welcome to visitors, interact amicably with each other and treat their teachers with respect. Most feel safe at school. They know that they can express any concerns they may have and trust that staff will deal with them effectively. In general, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online.

In most cases, pupils arrive at their lessons punctually and are ready to work. Many work effectively and enthusiastically in pairs and groups, and respect each other's contributions. Many pupils strive hard when working independently. They concentrate well and persevere when facing a challenge. A majority of pupils have the skills to improve their own learning effectively. However, a few pupils' challenging behaviour limits their progress and that of their peers.

A majority of pupils benefit from the experience of undertaking leadership roles. These pupils make a beneficial contribution to the school's life and work, for example as class representatives in the year forums, as members of the school council, the eco council and the sports council. The school council works enthusiastically and effectively when leading a range of valuable charitable and environmental activities. They organise a variety of beneficial projects, for example when organising an anti-bullying campaign and a campaign to reduce litter around the school. Pupils on these councils develop beneficial business and enterprise skills. An example of this

is preparing a successful application for funding from the town council trust for a new water fountain for the school. The school council leads regular and effective meetings with the company that manages the school site to convey pupils' views on various aspects of school life. This has borne fruit, for example by improving the availability of healthy food in the canteen and reducing the use of plastic.

Many pupils understand and appreciate the advantages of eating healthily and a healthy lifestyle. They take part in various extra-curricular fitness and sports activities, for example the climbing club, canoeing at Nant Bwlch yr Haearn outdoor activity centre, in addition to the popular rugby teams.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Nearly all teachers have sound subject knowledge and most are good language models for pupils. In many lessons, there is a close and supportive working relationship. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour in the classroom effectively enough.

In a majority of cases, teachers plan their lessons carefully and provide an appropriate challenge for pupils. In a majority of lessons, teachers share learning objectives clearly and ensure that activities have a suitable tempo. They succeed in engaging pupils' interest and motivate them to achieve appropriately. In around half of lessons, teachers question pupils suitably. They ask open-ended questions and give appropriate time for pupils to formulate their responses. They correct pupils' misconceptions sensitively and give clear explanations to aid their understanding.

In a few cases, teachers show infectious enthusiasm for their subjects. They have very high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve and provide challenging work for them. These teachers plan their lessons creatively and provide stimulating activities for pupils. They ask pupils probing questions and follow up their responses to motivate them to elaborate on them and deepen their learning. In these lessons, pupils make very quick progress in their subject knowledge and skills.

In a majority of bilingual lessons, teachers provide skilfully for pupils who are following their courses in Welsh or English. However, in many Welsh-medium lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' use of the Welsh language. As a result, pupils turn to English when discussing or responding to teachers' questions too frequently.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. In these lessons, learning activities do not succeed in engaging pupils or challenging them appropriately. Teachers' planning does not match pupils' needs and abilities closely enough. In around half of lessons, teachers do not question pupils productively. Their questions tendency to be closed and, too often, teachers answer on behalf of pupils. This limits pupils' ability to respond to questions thoughtfully.

In a majority of cases, teachers monitor pupils' progress appropriately. These teachers give pupils useful oral and written feedback to help them to understand how to improve their work. In a majority of cases, pupils respond positively to observations, for example by re-drafting parts of their written work. However, in a

minority of cases, teachers' observations do not give pupils useful enough feedback, and therefore re-drafting does not improve the quality of their work.

The school provides a variety of beneficial extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' experiences outside the classroom. This includes a rich, full programme of visits, sports activities and appropriate cultural opportunities, including a trip to Iceland to study its geology. Valuable co-operation between the school and the local community enables pupils to take advantage of relevant extra-curricular experiences; for example, a choir of pupils and former pupils competes in local and national eisteddfodau.

The key stage 3 curriculum builds appropriately on pupils' previous learning. Overall, departments plan suitably for pupils with specific learning needs. However, provision to challenge more able pupils is not consistent or effective enough across departments. As a result, pupils across the full range of ability have a tendency to receive the same learning tasks.

In key stage 4 and the sixth form, the school offers a wide range of relevant subjects that respond to the catchment area's employment needs. It works effectively with other local schools and further education colleges in order to provide a broad provision of courses. Provision includes purposeful opportunities to develop pupils' skills in occupational contexts, including agriculture, animal care and construction. Partnerships with local employers provide beneficial experiences for pupils, for example during their enterprise work. The school adapts its curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of individual pupils. However, the offer does not respond successfully to the needs of a minority of pupils who are starting post-16 studies. As a result, these pupils do not succeed in transferring from Year 12 to Year 13.

The school has planned suitably to develop pupils' literacy, and there are appropriate opportunities to write at length in many subjects. However, planning to prepare pupils for these tasks is not rigorous enough. Provision for applying numeracy skills across the curriculum is developing appropriately. However, there is not enough variety or challenge in the tasks that are provided for pupils. The school has planned suitable opportunities to use ICT skills in a majority of subjects, but opportunities to develop these skills further are too limited. Pupils with poor reading and numeracy skills are given appropriate support.

The school forms suitable learning groups through valid use of assessment and wellbeing information. The opportunity for pupils who have not received all of their primary education through the medium of Welsh to transfer to Welsh-medium groups is a strength.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a caring and friendly school. The principles of the school's three golden rules, 'be respectful, be safe, be prepared', are a strong foundation for its work. As a result, many pupils treat each other with respect and behave in a civilised manner.

The school provides valuable support for pupils with additional learning needs. Provision within the 'Hwb' centre ensures excellent support for the wellbeing,

personal development and progress of vulnerable pupils. Support staff are used well to help these pupils. In order to ensure beneficial additional support for pupils, the school provides a range of interventions. For example, the school works with the Canine Intervention charity, which brings dogs to the class to comfort vulnerable pupils. Individual education plans for pupils with additional learning needs are useful documents, which include suitable strategies to meet their needs. The school tracks and reviews these pupils' progress against their targets appropriately.

The school has suitable systems for tracking pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Good use is made of the information that derives from these systems to identify need and provide purposeful support when responding to poor attendance and improving the behaviour of specific pupils. However, attainment targets for pupils are not always challenging enough to ensure that they achieve to the best of their ability.

Overall, the school communicates appropriately with parents. Interim and end of year reports include beneficial comments and useful targets for improvement.

A particular strength of the school's work is the way in which it works effectively with a wide range of external agencies. This ensures beneficial support for pupils. The school works successfully with the 'Action for children' charity to support the mental health of a cohort of pupils in Year 10. Personal and specialist provision for pupils who face significant barriers to learning is a prominent strength.

Pupils benefit from very beneficial advice and guidance when transferring from one stage to the next, including guidance relating to career choices. One valuable element of provision for careers education is the 'Digwyddiadur Gyrfaoedd' (career events guide), which provides a timely support programme for pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11.

Many of the staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. As a result of pupils' input, pupils understand the school's expectations.

The school provides valuable and attractive opportunities for pupils through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, such as gorge walking, skiing and surfing.

The school organises suitable provision for pupils' cultural development through a wide range of trips to local places of historical and cultural importance, including Llyn Celyn and 'Yr Ysgwrn', the home of Hedd Wyn.

There is a broad and appealing timetable of lunchtime and after-school activities for pupils, including fishing, horse riding and swimming clubs. Many of these activities promote fitness and encourage pupils to make choices that have a positive effect on their wellbeing. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of how to live healthily through a beneficial fitness programme. The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting eating and drinking healthily.

As a result of meaningful consultation with pupils, the school has planned/provides an effective personal and social education programme. This contributes beneficially to pupils' moral and social development and prepares them for adult life.

The school provides very valuable opportunities for pupils to become involved in the creative arts by taking part in local and national eisteddfodau. There are beneficial opportunities to take part in performances, including the recent performance of the musical 'Cae Melwr'. These opportunities have a very positive effect on pupils' confidence and performing skills.

Pupils' moral, social and spiritual development is supported well during pastoral periods, personal and social education sessions and group assemblies. In these assemblies, there is an opportunity for them to reflect meaningfully on their own beliefs and values and those of others.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher leads the school robustly and responds appropriately to local and national requirements. Her vision is to ensure that Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a bilingual and inclusive community, which serves its locality and offers opportunities for pupils to reach their potential. With the support of the senior management team, the headteacher conveys her vision to staff, pupils and parents appropriately.

The school has suitable priorities and effective day-to-day arrangements. A system of structured meetings that has been established firmly, alongside useful policies, are a foundation for purposeful management at the school. The roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and all members of staff are defined clearly. However, the senior management team's responsibilities have not been allocated in a balanced way. As a result, some members of the team do not have enough time to operate strategically enough to ensure improvements in teaching and standards. The school has a suitable line management system, but in a few cases, lines of accountability are not clear enough. The senior management team deals with staff underperformance in a supportive and positive manner. However, managers do not always challenge these staff enough in order to ensure improvements.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They have appropriate knowledge of the school and its processes. The role of governors as critical friends who challenge the school is developing.

The school has a comprehensive programme of activities to ensure quality, and many leaders are reasonably clear about their role in self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Leaders gather and use information from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work appropriately. They provide a useful summary of findings to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Good practice that is identified in this process is shared appropriately with staff. The school seeks the views of pupils and parents regularly and acts suitably on their ideas. Although evaluation processes has been established firmly, the quality of evaluation is too varied among leaders. In a minority of cases, they focus too much on compliance with policies, rather than on pupils' progress, standards and skills.

Leaders at all levels analyse performance data appropriately, on the whole, to identify key areas for improvement. However, as the school's quantitative targets are

too low, analyses of performance are often too generous. Leaders also do not compare performance rigorously enough against that of similar schools over time. As a result, the need for improvement is not identified in full.

The school improvement plan identifies appropriate areas that are in need of attention and there is a suitable link with the self-evaluation. A majority of middle leaders have an appropriate understanding of areas that are in need of development and plan suitably to improve them. Departmental plans reflect the school's priorities and include appropriate actions. However, actions for improvement are not always specific or timely enough. Over time, self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes have not led to improvements in outcomes at the end of key stage 4 or the sixth form.

The school manages the performance of all members of staff suitably against targets that are relevant to the school's priorities. This system is supported by a staff development plan, which responds appropriately to training requirements that arise from lesson evaluations and scrutiny of work.

The school invests heavily in order to develop all of its staff professionally and keep them informed about current developments in education. This includes appropriate opportunities for teachers to work with other schools and participate in learning communities. However, developments have not had a positive effect on standards or on teachers' practice.

The school has qualified staff who are deployed efficiently. The headteacher and governing body monitor the budget carefully. They forward-plan wisely and try not to damage pupils' education as a result of financial cuts. The school makes appropriate use of specific grants, including the deprivation grant.

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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