



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe**

**Alltacham Drive  
Pontardawe  
Abertawe  
SA8 4JX**

**Date of inspection: May 2022**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	322
Pupils of statutory school age	232
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	58
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	14.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	12.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	40.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	24/09/2013
Start date of inspection	03/05/2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](http://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

(a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Overview

Staff at Ysgol Gynradd Pontardawe work together effectively to provide valuable experiences that enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of their local area. Through their purposeful curriculum, '*Trysorau Tawe*' ('Tawe Treasures'), they teach pupils in a stimulating manner about their culture and heritage highly successfully. In turn, pupils benefit from visits to sessions in a nearby environmental centre. They talk enthusiastically about their experiences there and take part in engaging and exciting activities that develop their co-operation skills and self-confidence effectively. Teachers plan purposefully to support pupils to use their literacy and digital skills in themes across the areas of learning. However, teachers do not provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The headteacher and leadership team know the school well. Their arrangements to identify strengths and areas for improvement are detailed. The governing body is active and supports and challenges the school purposefully. The relationship between the school and parents is strong and they appreciate the regular communication between the school and the home. Following the pandemic, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills, which is beginning to have a positive effect on standards.

The school is a happy and friendly community with a caring and supportive ethos. Arrangements for listening and responding to the pupil's voice means that they influence what they would like to learn and choose the resources that support them to learn to the best of their ability in the classroom and around the school. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is broad and comprehensive.

## Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' Welsh oral skills

R2 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum

## 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 a case study on its work in relation to creating a local curriculum that is unique to the school, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Learning

When they start at the school, a majority of pupils have basic skills that are lower than expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress and achieve well.

On entry to the school, pupils who are new to the Welsh language learn it quickly and develop confidence when speaking and singing in front of others. Lower down the school, many pupils use an increasing range of vocabulary purposefully in a variety of situations. By Year 2, they listen attentively to instructions by adults and treat other pupils' views with respect. For example, through a visit to the river Tawe, pupils suggest beneficial ideas to prevent pollution. At the top of the school, most pupils communicate fluently in English and speak confidently in a range of contexts. Most listen well and respect the views of others when discussing various topics in both languages. However, across the school, limited vocabulary and awkward syntax hinder the confidence of a minority of pupils to communicate with increasing confidence in Welsh.

In the foundation phase, the reading skills of a majority of pupils are developing successfully. By the end of Year 2, they read clearly and accurately and build unfamiliar words effectively. Most of the school's oldest pupils read English confidently. They pay careful attention to punctuation and change their tone of voice to create effect when reading a conversation between different characters in a novel. Many pupils gather information from different sources and use this information effectively to enrich their work or when responding to specific tasks in both languages. A majority of the school's oldest pupils use techniques such as skimming effectively to find key information in text. Although the reading skills of a majority of the oldest pupils are not as developed, they show genuine pleasure when reading and discuss the content of texts and their favourite authors' books effectively.

The early writing skills of a majority of the youngest children are developing successfully. Most pupils in the Reception class are beginning to form letters and match sounds and letters at an early stage. By Year 3, many write independently for different purposes across the curriculum successfully. A majority of the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6 write with increasing confidence, use complex syntax purposefully and punctuate correctly, on the whole. A majority of the oldest pupils present their ideas effectively and show a sound grasp of writing genres, for example by writing a formal letter when applying for a job at Hogwarts.

Across the foundation phase, most pupils have a sound grasp of mathematical concepts. They use mental calculation methods to solve money problems and apply their skills successfully to solve problems in a variety of contexts. For example, Year 2 pupils estimate and measure capacity when comparing materials by discovering which material absorbs the most water. In the school's oldest years, most pupils make sound progress in their number skills and build on their previous learning skilfully. Most discuss different ways of calculating long multiplication and long division problems successfully. At the top of the school, most pupils use their

mathematical methods effectively, for example when adding and subtracting totals to £1000 to buy magical draughts.

Most pupils make sound use of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their work across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase use electronic equipment effectively. Pupils in the Reception class, for example, record their work in the outdoor area digitally and Year 2 pupils use simple databases to record their favourite Welsh bands. By the end of Year 6, most pupils develop their ICT skills skilfully and independently in a variety of activities, for example by presenting their findings in a database based on the wildlife at the Swansea Bay barrage. They also scrutinise and organise information confidently to discover specific facts to confirm their understanding. Nearly all pupils use safe and purposeful passwords when logging in to learning websites to complete their work in the classroom and at home.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils feel happy at school and speak enthusiastically about their experiences and what they learn. They are polite and respectful towards each other, with staff and visitors in the classrooms and around the school. They greet each other fondly, are friendly with each other and hold doors for others as they move around the school. They are happy to discuss any concerns with members of staff and are confident that they are listened to.

Nearly all pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. Most pupils are very caring towards each other and play together contentedly. 'Sports ambassadors' listen to the views of their fellow pupils and have purchased resources for the playground to be used during break times, for example. The use of fitness equipment, in addition to the daily '*chwarter chwim*' physical exercise session, ensure that nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of physical activity and take part in it regularly. The oldest pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular clubs that are provided by the school, for example the rugby club.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. For example, pupils make good use of the fruit shop and the oldest pupils take ownership and run it successfully. They speak passionately about the effect of sugary drinks on the body. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the school's agreed principles and morals. They contribute well during assemblies and lessons that promote important issues, such as their understanding of fairness, equality and sustainability.

Many pupils are enthusiastic learners who enjoy undertaking new experiences. Most are happy to discuss their work with their peers. They respect the contributions of others and respond positively to their ideas. Most pupils show perseverance when completing tasks and understand the importance of maintaining positive attitudes to their work. They explain that making mistakes and persevering are an important part of the learning process. They value the opportunities they are given to influence what they learn; for example, the youngest pupils offer sensible ideas on what to learn about a group of animals that live in the nearby forest. The school's oldest pupils choose educational trips to enrich their learning experiences. Their recent trip to a creative studio had a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing, in addition to motivating them to work creatively back at school.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of inspection area 4.

## Teaching and learning experiences

All teachers plan together effectively to ensure that all pupils are given valuable experiences that enrich their thorough knowledge and understanding of the local area. Through the purposeful curriculum, *'Trysorau Tawe'* ('Tawe Treasures'), teachers provide stimulating experiences that enrich experiences across the areas of learning and deepen pupils' understanding of the local area. For example, as a result of reading the story *'Tŷ ar y Tawe'*, pupils in Years 1 and 2 create a story trail, a raft to float and conduct experiments on water absorption.

The school's vision for the Curriculum for Wales is developing effectively and all teachers are planning purposefully in line with the six areas of learning and experience by taking advantage of including elements of the four purposes. Activities support pupils to apply their literacy and digital skills across the curriculum successfully. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

In the youngest classes, the foundation phase principles are embedded firmly and purposefully. Nearly all activities in the areas develop pupils' independence skilfully. Teachers make regular use of the outdoor classroom to develop pupils' skills across the areas of learning and experience. There are stimulating visual resources that promote linguistic and number skills clearly in these areas to reinforce learning effectively. Teachers organise regular visits to a nearby environmental centre, which enriches pupils' outdoor learning experiences; for example, pupils develop their skills in teambuilding activities by creating bird boxes and using the correct equipment to whittle wood.

*'Drilio Disglair'* and *'Sgleinio ein Sgwrsio'* methods are used across the whole school on a daily basis to improve pupils' Welsh oral skills, for example their discussion skills. By using video clips of different classes saying correct oral Welsh patterns to repeat as a whole class, many pupils, particularly the school's youngest pupils, use the patterns enthusiastically when discussing and speaking with increasing confidence. These methods have not been embedded consistently enough in provision to have a positive effect on the accuracy of the oral skills of a minority of pupils.

Teachers take advantage of every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of how to make healthy choices in terms of their lifestyle, for example by walking a mile during the daily *'chwarter chwim'* session. They encourage pupils to persevere, co-operate, try and develop positive attitudes to learning skilfully. As a result, most pupils across the school develop to become ambitious, enterprising, healthy and principled learners. Visits from a police officer contribute purposefully to reinforcing how to stay safe online and raise pupils' awareness of wider potential dangers in society.

Staff have a good relationship with pupils, which fosters a positive and supportive environment for learning. In most learning sessions, teachers speak accurate Welsh

which, in turn, supports pupils to develop their skills in the language correctly. They set clear learning objectives and develop activities with a suitable pace. They use a range of interesting resources to engage pupils' interest and curiosity, for example by providing ultraviolet torches to enable pupils to search for familiar words in a picture of a tree. In the best example, they use a variety of questioning techniques effectively to extend pupils' understanding of different learning contexts.

Most teachers provide pupils with useful oral feedback and, on the whole, provide written feedback that supports pupils to improve their work purposefully. Pupils are given regular opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers in line with the activity's expectations. By doing so, most pupils know how to improve their work and are able to explain the next steps in their learning.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Leaders and staff work together effectively to create a happy community in a safe learning environment. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Pupils' physical and emotional health and wellbeing are given a prominent place in school life and there is a variety of opportunities to keep fit through various activities, which include football with a local club. The school has relevant arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily and pupils understand what they need to do to stay fit and healthy.

Daily assemblies and visits by members of the community promote pupils' spiritual and moral development effectively, and there are regular opportunities to reflect on current affairs and other religions. However, plans for teaching pupils about multicultural communities and diverse relationships are not always delivered purposefully enough. Teachers occasionally promote local links with places of worship for different religions. This leads to nurturing a strong culture of respect and equality among pupils and develops a sound awareness of values such as fairness and respect for others. This is highlighted through a successful campaign led by pupils to collect donations for the local food bank. The school promotes local cultural and heritage highly effectively by providing appropriate opportunities to develop beneficial experiences for pupils to appreciate local heritage.

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to influence aspects of the school's life and work. As a result, members of the parliament respond to their peers' needs successfully. For example, they respond to the voice of their peers by ordering digital resources that contribute to raising pupils' digital standards across the school. Staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to contribute their voice to activities that reinforce and enrich their thematic work. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and apply themselves fully to activities.

Pupils are given opportunities for develop their creative and physical skills appropriately, for example by performing and competing in the school and in competitions and eisteddfodau. A notable example of this is the opportunities provided for pupils to work with local artists to create a series of murals in the school gymnasium to celebrate the local area's dialect, culture and heritage. This develops pupils' creative skills and self-confidence skilfully and makes a beneficial contribution towards fostering pupils' respect towards their work.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is comprehensive and highly effective. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage and support programmes meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs effectively. Teachers provide comprehensive and purposeful individual development plans for pupils, which include opportunities to review them regularly. The school has good links with a variety of support services and external agencies, including speech and language therapists and educational psychologists.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher's robust and effective leadership sets a clear strategic direction for the development of the school. He has a clear vision that is based on ensuring that all pupils receive the best possible education in a homely and safe environment. He shares this vision successfully with staff, pupils, governors and parents. Members of the management team develop their strategic role effectively and support the headteacher purposefully. As a result, there is a culture of high expectations and an ethos of close co-operation across the school.

The headteacher has established robust arrangements to monitor and evaluate learning and provision. Leaders use a number of sources of evidence effectively to gain a clear picture of the school's performance. They prepare detailed monitoring reports that identify strengths and aspects for improvement accurately. Leaders use information from the self-evaluation processes successfully to set clear priorities for improvement. Priorities focus firmly on raising the standards of pupils' skills and prepare effectively for the arrival of the additional learning needs transformation programme. For example, leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' standards of oracy on their return to school following the lockdown periods. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise speaking Welsh regularly in order to raise standards.

The headteacher forges a strong relationship with parents and they value the clear communication between the school and the home. Leaders seek parents' views regularly through purposeful questionnaires, analyse them in detail and respond appropriately to their responses, for example by adapting reports for parents on their children's progress.

Members of the governing body are extremely supportive of the school and know it well. They use their different expertise to support and challenge leaders effectively. Although the governors' usual arrangements of visiting activities have not been resumed in full since the pandemic, they receive up-to-date information through sub-committees. This enables them to question and challenge staff before feeding back to the full governing body. Governors work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, most pupils speak confidently about healthy eating practices and understand the importance of a balanced diet.

The headteacher manages the school's funding effectively with the willing and experienced support of a member of the governing body. The school's leaders make good use of a variety of grants, for example to ensure that there are enough resources of a high standard to enrich provision in the outdoor area. Staff use the areas effectively to inspire pupils by providing them with stimulating learning



experiences. The pupil development grant is used effectively to provide support from specialist staff and ensure that all pupils are able to go on educational visits. As a result, pupils are able to take advantage of purposeful educational experiences that have a positive influence on their standards and wellbeing.

Staff's professional learning experiences link effectively with the school's priorities for improvement. Learning assistants are an important part of the school team. They contribute regularly to raising pupils' educational standards, wellbeing and social standards. They engage fully in the performance management process and respond positively to raise pupils' standards of oracy. Staff's willingness to research their local area to plan and deliver a curriculum that is relevant to the school's pupils is a strong feature of the school's work.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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