



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Cae Top

**Ffordd Eithinog
Bangor
LL57 2GZ**

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gynradd Cae Top

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Cae Top
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	237
Pupils of statutory school age	178
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	29
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 23.7%)</i>	19.4%
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 13.2%)</i>	18.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	19.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	12.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2016
Start date of inspection	17/06/2024

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

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

Overview

Ysgol Cae Top is a happy and homely place for pupils, staff and visitors. Staff foster pupils' pride in the Welsh language and deepen their knowledge of local history and national traditions extremely effectively. There is a warm welcome for all pupils and their families. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be part of a stimulating and inclusive learning environment. The headteacher and staff take exceptionally good care of pupils and want them to thrive in learning and in life.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their numeracy, English and digital skills from their starting points. Many build progressively on their writing skills. However, the culture of reading does not encourage most pupils to enjoy Welsh texts. Pupils also tend to use English and a language for communication and socialising. Together, this limits the development of their Welsh oracy and reading skills.

The school has responded proactively and creatively to the requirements of Curriculum for Wales, offering valuable guidance to schools across Wales. The innovative nature of strategic plans provides rich opportunities and experiences for pupils across the school to develop and apply their skills imaginatively. Pupils learn about the history, culture and legends of the area and this enriches their learning highly successfully.

The headteacher provides strong and compassionate leadership and knows the school very well. He motivates and supports everyone's professional development and is supported skilfully by all staff. They trust each other to form an effective, successful team. The teaching team works purposefully alongside the governing body to ensure improvements to the school. Together, they understand the school's strengths and areas for development and plan comprehensive strategic steps to ensure improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' use of spoken Welsh and foster a rich reading culture to support pupils' enjoyment and progress in reading Welsh
- R2 Improve attendance

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 motivating and mentoring staff to develop leadership, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils have the skills that are expected for their age and ability, with the exception of their spoken Welsh skills, where most are below what is expected.

From these starting points, most pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households, make positive progress, particularly in their numeracy, writing and digital skills. They deepen their understanding and acquire knowledge with increasing confidence in a rich range of learning contexts. One notable element of the school is that pupils enjoy coming to school and make consistent progress in an extremely supportive learning environment.

Most pupils listen attentively to each other's contributions and staff's instructions. Most of the youngest pupils repeat vocabulary and language patterns correctly. By Year 2, many pupils talk enthusiastically about their work, for example by using imaginative adjectives when planting plants and describing insects. At the top of the school, most construct extended English sentences confidently to include occasional blended phrases. However, across the school, most pupils turn to English when communicating with each other in formal and informal situations.

Many pupils' reading skills develop consistently. The youngest pupils develop their knowledge of letter sounds skilfully and, by Year 2, they use a good range of strategies effectively to read less familiar words. Many of the oldest pupils develop their skills soundly and enjoy reading a variety of English-medium texts. However, very few pupils develop their enjoyment and knowledge of Welsh reading texts.

Most pupils refine their writing skills with increasing confidence in Welsh and English as they move through the school. The youngest pupils make strong progress in their early writing skills when forming letters in the outdoor area. In Year 2, most select words carefully to create effect, for example when writing a description of the Britannia Bridge.

By Years 3 and 4, most pupils write with appropriate accuracy in various contexts and in a variety of genres, for example when writing a newspaper article about a whale that has been found on the Llŷn Peninsula. In Years 5 and 6, pupils develop their ability to write in a relevant range of genres and select words carefully to create effect. Most of the oldest pupils deepen their knowledge skilfully in both languages which, in turn, supports them to make continuous progress in their writing skills. When presenting extended pieces, they develop their skills coherently, often when applying their digital skills. For example, they write a report for and against flooding the Tryweryn valley and apply their digital skills to present it creatively in green screen form. Extensive digital provision enriches pupils' communication experiences successfully.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. The youngest pupils come to recognise numbers and simple 3D shapes and develop an

understanding of measurement well. In Year 2, most apply their numeracy skills effectively through activities both inside and outside the classroom. For example, in the forest school, they use natural objects skilfully and measure insects and place them in order from biggest to smallest. At the top of the school, most pupils apply their numeracy skills in contemporary and interesting contexts. For example, when conducting an investigation into cleaning water, they measure the size of particles and stones to discover the effect of this on filtration time.

Most pupils' digital skills develop extremely effectively through a wide variety of learning experiences. The youngest pupils add text and change font size effectively and use database programs skilfully, for example when counting insects. In Year 4, as part of their theme work, they animate the tales of the Mabinogi highly effectively and add sound. Most Year 5 and 6 pupils demonstrate a good understanding of simple coding to manage and input instructions.

Most pupils' creative and physical skills develop soundly. Across the school, pupils work with artists, musicians and agencies to research the rich history of the local area. They apply their skills skilfully to create and perform digital presentations based on their theme work. This has led to pupils developing their artistic and musical talents successfully.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The school's happy and welcoming environment contributes effectively to ensuring that pupils are valued within a caring community. Pupils and their parents value the care of staff and are confident that they respond immediately to any concerns they may have. Nearly all pupils enjoy attending school and feel happy within its inclusive atmosphere. They feel completely safe and know that staff are available to listen to any concerns they have and give them clear advice.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils across the school is very good and they treat adults and visitors with respect and courtesy. They are polite and considerate of each other and show genuine pride when talking about their school.

Most pupils respond enthusiastically in influencing what they learn. Through the effective use of the planning walls and discussions at the beginning of a new theme, pupils share their ideas and add questions about what they would like to learn. They feel that adults listen to their ideas and consider them when planning learning activities for them. This contributes firmly to ensuring that most pupils show an interest in their work and are curious when learning.

Most of the youngest pupils develop independent skills increasingly skilfully as they work in small groups without adult guidance. In Years 3 and 4, most pupils persevere with tasks and are enterprising contributors in a group, for example as they solve multi-step numeracy problems to calculate the cost of a trip to the local theatre. At the top of the school, most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning. They listen attentively to each other and concentrate for extended periods.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of their responsibilities as global, ethical and informed citizens. They understand the importance of supporting others in society and organise successful activities when raising money for various charities.

This has a positive effect on their understanding of the needs of others, both locally and nationally.

A majority of pupils are proud members of the pupil's voice councils and fulfil their roles purposefully. For example, the 'Balchder Bangor' council holds activities to create bird nests to engage pupils' interest in appreciating wildlife. The 'Cewri Cymru' council also promotes the element of belonging and Welshness by composing an anthem for the school and playing Welsh songs at break time.

Most pupils develop as healthy and confident individuals and understand how to make sensible choices in relation to diet and physical activity. They enjoy taking part in physical education and fitness activities to develop their physical skills, for example by taking part in forest school sessions and by using a variety of equipment on the school playground. The oldest pupils enjoy taking part in a variety of competitions including football, rugby and swimming. Pupils are aware of the importance of coming to school regularly. Despite the school's appropriate work to ensure pupils' regular attendance, attendance levels over the past two years are still low.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, all staff work extremely effectively with pupils and parents to develop a stimulating and exciting curriculum which meets the needs of nearly all pupils very well. They have a clear vision based on providing learning experiences that inspire pupils, spark their imagination and nurture their natural curiosity skilfully. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and considers the links between the local area, Wales and the wider world skilfully. For example, following a visit to Penrhyn quarry, the school has linked the wealth of the Penrhyn family to the slaves of the Pennant family in Jamaica.

Across the school, the engaging learning environment encourages productive and purposeful learning. There is an effective working relationship between staff and pupils and they promote positive behaviour skilfully. They treat pupils with kindness and respect and place their happiness and well-being as clear priorities. Staff ensure regular access for pupils to undertake activities in the attractive outdoor areas which motivate pupils and stimulate learning. For example, the youngest pupils enjoy playing freely in an environment that is full of exciting choices and activities.

Teachers and assistants work together effectively to provide learning activities by planning engaging themes. Experiences build systematically on pupils' knowledge, understanding and interests to ensure progression in learning. The themes have been planned skilfully to ensure that there are exciting learning contexts and input from the school community. For example, parents attend public performances at the local theatre at the end of themes to celebrate pupils' work. Provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills has been planned carefully and ensures that pupils are given rich opportunities to apply their skills across a wide range of stimulating contexts. These learning experiences encourage pupils to experiment, ask questions and work effectively with their peers.

Staff make very effective use of creative practitioners to enrich learning experiences. For example, a local playwright holds practical sessions to create a podcast to

develop pupils' Welsh oracy skills. These visits spark pupils' imagination and expand their knowledge of Wales and their heritage.

All staff use a good range of teaching methods to promote learning purposefully. Teachers set clear objectives and ensure that all pupils are given an opportunity to succeed. They are excellent language role models and use probing questioning methods that retrieve previous knowledge to confirm pupils' understanding skilfully. However, Welsh literacy provision does not always foster a culture that encourages pupils to communicate in Welsh and encourage their enjoyment and progress in reading Welsh books.

Most teachers assess pupils' work correctly and use this information purposefully. They provide constructive oral and written feedback, ensuring that pupils understand what they need to do to move their learning forward and develop their skills further. In the best practice, feedback focuses on important aspects that are relevant to the task and provides pupils with clear guidance to respond to feedback and improve specific aspects of their work.

Leaders and staff monitor and track pupils' progress in detail and use this information purposefully to hold professional discussions among the staff. This information is used effectively to respond to the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers share information with parents and carers regularly about their children's progress and well-being, which helps them understand how to support them at home. Annual reports for parents report clearly on pupils' progress, in addition to the areas that they need to develop.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring, homely and stimulating community. The school's ethos and collective worship assemblies promote pupils' spiritual and moral development successfully. Staff encourage pupils to consider the views of others sensitively, and to recognise and respect diversity and the importance of values such as tolerance. They lead purposeful discussions to reinforce these values skilfully. This ensures that most pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and know what is just and fair.

The school emphasises respecting their '*cynefin*', or local area, and the wider world to develop polite pupils who behave well and are proud of their school and their community. Staff plan learning experiences with care to meet pupils' emotional, personal and social needs. Nearly all pupils treat their peers and staff with empathy and respect and everyone treats each other with loving care.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and staff provide a caring and safe environment for pupils. Leaders ensure that all members of staff are given purposeful training and the governing body works closely with leaders and staff to update procedures regularly.

Provision to develop pupils' expressive and creative skills is an obvious strength. Visitors are used extremely effectively to broaden pupils' creative experiences; for example, artists and musicians visit the school to create impressive pieces of art and

to co-compose and perform songs. This contributes very successfully to building the confidence of many pupils and their ability to co-operate effectively.

The school's effective communication methods ensure strong relationships between pupils, their families and the school. Staff organise a number of events in partnership with the community, which reinforces the sense of belonging and helps pupils to respect and care for others. For example, the school is a central part of the local community and takes full advantage of opportunities to hold activities such as services and concerts in the local churches and centres. Following its service at the cathedral, the school supports local and international charities such as Bangor food bank and a charity to feed a cow in Kenya.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils from different backgrounds to have a purposeful influence on developments, ideas and stimulating learning experiences. This has a positive influence on the school. Members of the school council councils are proud of their responsibilities and report back to their peers in school assemblies. This influences learning activities in themes such as '*Bangor a'r Byd*' ('Bangor and the World') and helps to ensure that pupils celebrate the backgrounds and culture of different pupils.

The headteacher and all staff have a particular interest in and a thorough knowledge of the needs of all pupils. The school has established effective arrangements to track and monitor pupils' well-being and progress. This information is used effectively to plan the next steps in their learning. Staff recognise the importance of early intervention and provide comprehensive support to individuals and groups of pupils from a young age. They provide support to those who need additional support through the use of purposeful support programmes. A variety of partnerships with agencies provide effective support for learners with additional learning needs. Reviews of pupils' progress lead to staff having a sound understanding of pupils' needs.

The school has beneficial arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Staff encourage pupils to eat healthily and develop fitness through a variety of physical activities. The attractive outdoor area, such as the outdoor gym and the cabins in the forest school, promote pupils' health and well-being effectively. This promotes pupils' understanding of how to make healthy choices in terms of their lifestyle and the importance of keeping fit.

The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' regular attendance are appropriate. Staff keep a record of any absences and contact parents and the attendance officer within the authority in a timely manner to discuss any concerns regarding their children's attendance. However, attendance rates continue to be below the national average. Although leaders prioritise improving attendance, overall, they do not use or analyse the relevant data thoroughly enough to identify patterns and monitor the effect of their work on pupils' attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, leaders and all staff work together extremely effectively to create a caring and inspiring learning environment, which has been planned carefully for pupils. The headteacher ensures strong and strategic leadership, which provides a

clear direction and stimulates staff's enthusiasm to give of their best to the school and the community. With the support of staff, governors and parents, the school has fostered a robust vision. This is based on developing pupils' pride in themselves and their local area, emphasising working together to promote well-being and education, care and happiness for all. This contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and makes them proud of their school.

Staff understand their responsibilities well and take advantage of valuable opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of current educational changes. For example, staff lead and develop plans for the areas of learning and experience as they establish and develop Curriculum for Wales further. Staff performance management arrangements and support and motivation to develop leadership are extremely effective and make an excellent contribution to their professional development. With a good range of opportunities to develop professionally, leaders encourage staff to research and implement new teaching and learning methods. For example, staff have adopted effective ways of expanding numeracy skills through authentic experiences.

All members of the leadership team, including those with responsibilities in different areas, take part in the self-evaluation process for improvement. The school implements detailed and successful monitoring arrangements. Pupils, parents and governors also contribute regularly. These arrangements are based on a wide range of sources of first-hand evidence, which provide a detailed and accurate picture of the current situation. The information gathered has a direct influence on the school's priorities for improvement, with a particular emphasis on linking learning with the purpose of everyday life and pupils' interests. School improvement processes are comprehensive and have a positive effect on improving the progress, achievement and attainment of most pupils.

Leaders monitor the effect of professional learning activities on provision and teaching methods. They base staff's professional learning activities on the priorities in the school improvement plan, national priorities and individual professional needs. They ensure that the teaching team are given regular and valuable opportunities to observe each other's successful teaching practices and work with other schools. This improves their teaching and planning methods for stimulating experiences related to the themes. For example, the oldest pupils deepen their understanding of the effect of litter and pollution on the community skilfully.

The school implements extremely effective arrangements to develop a culture of motivation and mentoring that aligns with formal and informal leadership experiences at all levels. Senior leaders motivate and mentor others, by following specific steps and arrangements so that staff believe in themselves, take the next step in their careers and develop as future leaders. They also organise for teachers to observe each other's good practice across the school and in other schools in the local area. This supports pupils to be principled learners who are willing to listen attentively to others, reflect on current affairs and make good choices.

Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and work purposefully with him and staff, questioning the impact of their work as critical friends. They are knowledgeable and their intelligent and positive input contributes effectively to improvements across the school. The headteacher advises them realistically and

honestly about how to improve provision, for example on the need to challenge pupils to improve their skills. Governors are knowledgeable about national priorities, such as Curriculum for Wales and the impact of poverty on the lives of pupils and their families within their own community. They ensure that the school has purposeful arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders seek parents' views regularly on important aspects of their children's learning experiences and incorporate them skilfully into Curriculum for Wales. For example, this includes providing activities that deepen pupils' understanding of issues to promote fitness, applying their digital skills and creating a film as a means of transferring information. Staff also take advantage of the skills and expertise of parents and community partners skilfully in authentic learning contexts that engage pupils' interest and raise their aspirations.

The school's relationship with parents in supporting the community and working together continuously promotes the school and its relationship with the wider community extremely effectively.

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:

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