

A report on

Ysgol Llanhari

**Llanharry
Pontyclun
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF72 9XE**

Date of inspection: October 2025

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Llanhari

| | |
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| Name of provider | Ysgol Llanhari |
| Local authority | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider | Welsh |
| School category according to Welsh-medium provision | |
| Type of school | All age school |
| Religious character | * |
| Number of pupils on roll | 647 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 532 |
| Number in the sixth form | 67 |
| Number in nursery classes | 21 |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year <i>average</i> (<i>The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the all-age sector is 20.2%</i>) | 6.2% |
| 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 all-age sector is 8.6%</i>) | 2.6% |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home | 60.5% |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language | 0.0% |
| Lead partner for Initial Teacher Education | Yes |
| Date of headteacher appointment | 01/09/2022 |

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| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | 23/10/2017 |
| Start date of inspection | 06/10/2025 |

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

Summary

Ysgol Llanhari is a caring and inclusive community that promotes a strong sense of belonging. In learning sessions, nearly all teachers foster positive working relationships with pupils. As a result of the valuable pastoral care and the effective health and well-being provision, most pupils feel safe at school. Their behaviour is extremely polite and respectful. A strong feature is pupils' willingness to work and discuss with their peers, with many demonstrating very positive attitudes to learning.

Many pupils across the age range make the expected progress, which a few making strong progress in their lessons and over time. Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to practise and develop their literacy skills, particularly their speaking and listening skills. There are also purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills while at school. However, although opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy and digital skills are planned across the curriculum, provision has not been co-ordinated strategically enough to ensure that pupils develop these skills progressively during their time at the school.

Staff provide valuable learning activities and experiences that support pupils to settle quickly and contribute fully to school life. There is beneficial co-operation with partner schools, for example in promoting the status of international languages as part of the curriculum. There are also purposeful opportunities for pupils to contribute to various committees and to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips.

The school develops a culture of professional learning successfully. A clear focus on teaching and learning has a positive effect on what happens in lessons. As a result, nearly all teachers ensure a supportive learning environment and foster positive working relationships with pupils. Many teachers plan purposeful activities, provide constructive verbal feedback and ask an appropriate combination of questions to check pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The headteacher and leadership team work closely together and share their ambitious vision, which is based firmly on the values of Community, Welshness and Progress. Although leaders have suitable processes for self-evaluating provision and planning for improvement, they do not always focus sufficiently on the effect of their work on pupils' outcomes.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Strengthen provision for the progressive development of pupils' numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum
- R2. Sharpen self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes to focus precisely on the steps that will have the greatest influence on pupils' outcomes

What happens next

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Most pupils at Ysgol Llanhari behave extremely politely and respectfully when greeting each other, their teachers and visitors to the school. Many demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, listening carefully to their teachers' instructions and concentrating well throughout their learning sessions. A strong feature of their attitude to learning is their willingness to discuss with their peers when given an opportunity to do so. On the whole, across the school, many pupils make progress in line with their age, including pupils with additional learning needs. A few pupils make strong progress in their lessons and over time.

Nearly all teachers foster positive working relationships with pupils and ensure a secure and supportive learning environment. They have sound subject knowledge and, in most sessions, use vocabulary and terminology purposefully to support pupils' linguistic development. These teachers guide learning by providing clear instructions so that pupils understand what needs to be done. Many teachers plan clear learning objectives and prepare activities that build gradually to enable pupils to make the expected progress. They use purposeful starter activities and effective resources to maintain pupils' interest. These teachers ensure that the level of challenge is appropriate and respond flexibly to pupils' needs by adapting tasks as the lesson progresses. Many teachers ask an appropriate combination of questions to check understanding and direct learning. They offer constructive oral feedback as they walk around the learning areas and provide targeted support, where necessary. Where appropriate, these teachers also provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to read and discuss in pairs and groups, which contributes positively to the development of their communication skills.

In a minority of cases where teaching is at its strongest, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan extremely effective activities that challenge pupils skilfully. These teachers use assessment strategies expertly to identify misconceptions and adapt the pace and level of challenge of the lesson in line with pupils' needs. In the primary department, teachers encourage pupils to play an important part in the planning process, by fostering in them a sense of ownership of their learning.

In a few cases, teaching is not as effective, which means that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. In these cases, teachers' expectations are not high enough and they tend to over-direct learning, which limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. They present tasks that do not respond fully to the range of abilities within the class or pose a sufficient challenge. In these cases, teachers' questions are closed, in

the main and, as a result, there are no opportunities for pupils to think more deeply or explain their answers in full.

In general, the quality of teachers' written comments and their effect on pupils' progress is inconsistent across the school. Where this is done well, clear and useful comments lead to pupils responding appropriately to improve the quality of their work and beneficial strategies are used to encourage them to make useful improvements. Where feedback is less effective, it does not draw attention to important errors in pupils' work and does not lead to clear improvement in the standard of work.

Literacy skills

Most of the school's youngest pupils acquire language and vocabulary and develop their listening and speaking skills successfully from a young age. During their time in the primary department, many pupils use the Welsh language naturally in their lessons and when talking to staff and visitors. As a result of beneficial strategies such as 'Troï a thrafod', many pupils across the school contribute purposefully to pair and group work in sessions across the curriculum. In the secondary department, many pupils give appropriate answers to their teachers' questions, by using subject vocabulary knowledgeably. A minority of pupils make eloquent contributions to class discussions, by using a range of sophisticated vocabulary and well-developed syntax to express their views.

Most of the school's youngest pupils develop their reading skills suitably. Many pupils read with a good level of accuracy in Welsh and English by the end of Year 6. They also demonstrate a sound understanding of what they read and discuss their favourite authors. Most of the older pupils in the primary department and pupils in the secondary department locate information in texts confidently use their basic reading skills successfully across the curriculum. Many secondary age pupils are able to recognise stylistic features and useful quotations sensibly when responding to increasingly complex texts. A minority of these pupils explain the effect that stylistic features have on the reader effectively. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a few older pupils develop their advanced reading skills well, for example when interpreting and analysing texts in their Welsh lessons and when summarising and combining information from various sources in their humanities lessons. There is valuable provision to promote a culture of reading and develop pupils' early reading skills across the school. For example, there are 'Dwlw ar Ddarllen' learning sessions for pupils in the primary department, along with opportunities for parents to visit the school to see how this strategy is used with their children.

The writing skills of most of the school's youngest pupils are developing well. They are given valuable opportunities to create letter shapes by using a variety of materials, before moving on to recognising familiar letters and building simple words through beneficial

practical activities. By the end of Year 2, many pupils begin to develop appropriate writing stamina in a variety of contexts and areas of learning. They succeed in writing simple letters and short stories. When they reach the primary department's older years, most pupils write successfully in a good range of different genres in both languages. Many set out their work methodically and, when given an opportunity to do so, begin to make simple amendments to refine and improve their work.

In the secondary department, many pupils write appropriate extended pieces in both Welsh and English. A few pupils write captivatingly, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of how language features have an effect on the reader. They use effective idioms and similes, for example when writing Mared's diary entry, a character from 'Yn y Gwaed', in their Welsh lessons. In a few cases, opportunities for the school's older pupils to write independently are hindered by the unnecessary use of ready-made frameworks or over-direction. A minority use awkward syntax and a few pupils make frequent spelling and grammatical errors, despite their teachers' corrections. In the older years in the primary department and in the secondary department, a few pupils' handwriting does not flow and their work is untidy.

Numeracy skills

Many pupils have sound basic numeracy skills and apply the four number rules effectively across the curriculum. They handle data, produce graphs and take measurements appropriately in science and geography sessions and solve time and money problems at the relevant level. Older pupils use their numeracy skills confidently to solve equations in scientific contexts. However, a few pupils have difficulty transferring their understanding when carrying out relevant tasks across other subjects and are unable to explain mathematical processes robustly enough. Although opportunities to develop numeracy skills are mapped across the curriculum, provision has not been co-ordinated strategically to develop these skills progressively over time.

Digital skills

In general, secondary age pupils use their digital skills appropriately in an appropriate range of subjects across the curriculum. They record and present information in various ways and use digital technology to create a series of instructions, graphs and presentations appropriately. In a few cases, they develop a good understanding of computer concepts and processes, such as artificial intelligence. Opportunities for primary age pupils to apply their digital skills across the curriculum are limited. Although opportunities are mapped across the areas of learning, provision has not been co-ordinated strategically to develop their skills progressively over time.

Sixth form

Sixth-form pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their work and their chosen subjects. They make mature contributions to class discussions and ask appropriate questions to deepen their understanding. They also persevere well when undertaking independent tasks. The oldest pupils are very willing to contribute to the school's work and act beneficially as role models, for example when supporting the school's younger pupils in numeracy sessions.

Curriculum

Leaders have a clear vision for realising Curriculum for Wales, which is based on developing pupils who realise their educational and social potential. The school works beneficially with partner schools to agree on common expectations for the curriculum. An excellent feature of this co-operation is the opportunities to learn international languages.

Spotlight: Promoting the status of international languages in the curriculum

The school has planned a consistent international languages curriculum for pupils at the school and partner schools from Year 5 onwards. A subject specialist conducts weekly international language lessons across the cluster to provide opportunities for pupils to become familiar with the relationship between a number of languages, including French, Spanish and Italian. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards languages and their willingness to contribute orally during sessions.

A beneficial link with a school in Guadeloupe provides valuable opportunities for secondary age pupils to get to know children from a different culture and to use an international language in a social context. As a result of all of this, pupils foster positive attitudes to multilingualism. This has a positive effect on the percentage of pupils who continue to study international languages in key stage 4 and the sixth form.

The school's curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. A notable strength is the comprehensive health and well-being provision, which provide appropriate experiences for pupils to develop an understanding of the features of healthy relationships, sexuality and diversity in a way that is suitable for their age. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the local area and Wales through opportunities to study themes such as 'Chwalu Ffiniau' ('Breaking Boundaries') in the primary department and the national anthem in the secondary department. Leaders also map and plan valuable opportunities to enrich the curriculum through a variety of trips. For

example, trips are organised for the primary department to the BBC studios and the Botanic Garden, a Year 7 trip to the Bryn Pica recycling centre and international trips for older pupils.

In health and well-being lessons, pupils are given valuable opportunities to consider and appreciate diversity and develop an understanding of how to make healthy choices. This is reinforced further through the morning 'Munud i Feddwl Llais Llanhari' reflection sessions. For example, pupils discuss themes maturely, such as the benefits of vegetarian and vegan food choices for their physical and mental health. Leaders make good use of pupils' opinions to design relevant sessions that respond to current affairs.

The school offers an appropriate range of courses in key stage 4, including an outdoor learning course and sociology. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to attend sixth-form taster sessions when choosing their post-16 learning pathways. Sixth-form curriculum provision is appropriate and meets the learning preferences of many pupils, but vocational subjects are limited.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and happy community where there is a strong sense of belonging and pride in being part of the 'Llanhari family'. From when they start in the nursery class or in Year 7, pupils are given purposeful opportunities to develop and grow as informed and mature individuals during their time at the school. Beneficial opportunities are provided through specific lessons and assemblies for pupils to develop their social skills. For example, attention is given to how to be considerate of the feelings of others and celebrate diversity. The school maintains a suitable culture of safeguarding. As a result, most pupils feel that they are encouraged to respect others and that they are safe at school.

Most pupils' behaviour in learning sessions and during break and lunchtimes is very good. In the early years classes, most pupils build positive relationships with the adults who care for them and their friends. Most of the older pupils display increasing maturity through their willingness to discuss and work with their peers. In addition, through a variety of pupil's voice committees, pupils' leadership skills develop firmly and influence the experiences of their fellow pupils successfully. For example, leaders and members of the school council have met with officers from the local authority's catering team to influence the content of the school's menu. Most primary age pupils and many secondary age pupils feel that leaders and staff listen to them and respond positively to their ideas.

Across the school, leaders, teachers and support staff work together closely to provide pastoral care of a high standard. Staff know the pupils very well and there are strong arrangements to support their needs. The school provides a rich range of interventions for

individuals and groups of pupils to ensure that they develop confidence and gain satisfaction through their school experience. The school has robust arrangements for ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support to maintain their well-being. The 'Yr Hafan', 'Yr Hwb' and 'Nyth' centres provide effective support for vulnerable pupils to develop their skills, in addition to supporting their emotional development successfully.

Leaders have thorough processes to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). There are purposeful systems to identify pupils' needs quickly and a range of purposeful interventions and support are arranged to support these pupils. Ongoing co-operation with a variety of external agencies, including the local authority, is a strength, including facilitating coffee mornings to raise parents' awareness of the support services available. Leaders provide staff with purposeful training and specific guidelines to support pupils' needs. As a result of this comprehensive provision, most pupils with ALN make good progress against their personal targets.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance carefully and raise the awareness of pupils and families of the importance of attending school regularly. The school identifies and targets the attendance of individuals and groups of pupils sensibly. Strategies such as the 'Y Nyth' provision to improve the attendance of specific groups of pupils are beginning to have a positive effect. As a result, the school's attendance, including the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, compares well with that of similar schools, although it remains slightly below pre-pandemic levels.

The school has effective procedures to ensure that pupils settle quickly when they join the school in the nursery class or Year 7. This includes robust transition arrangements with the partner primary schools. Staff in the secondary department also provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to think about the next steps in their educational lives, for example through work experience opportunities for Year 10 pupils.

The wide variety of extra-curricular activities provide valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise and contribute to school life. Pupils enjoy attending clubs such as the gardening club, the drama club and choral sessions where there is an opportunity to sing together for enjoyment.

Leading and improving

The headteacher is a passionate and sensible leader who undertakes her responsibilities enthusiastically. In a relatively short time since being appointed, she has strengthened the sense of the 'Ysgol Llanhari family' and continued to develop leadership for an all-age school. The headteacher has a clear vision which is based firmly on the values of 'Community, Welshness and Progress'. She communicates this vision and her expectations

eloquently and consistently to the school community. This contributes successfully to the school's distinct Welsh and familial ethos.

Senior leaders' responsibilities have been allocated sensibly and, in general, align with their personal expertise. They work closely as a leadership team and have an increasing influence on the whole age range. Middle leaders work closely with the leadership team and benefit from regular meetings and valuable support. Line management arrangements are clear and agreed. Line management meetings provide beneficial opportunities to discuss suitable issues, including pupils' outcomes, provision and progress against improvement plans. The school has appropriate systems for managing staff performance. Staff objectives are relevant and link appropriately to the school's priorities and personal aspirations.

The school has a comprehensive range of self-evaluation activities. Leaders at all levels contribute actively to quality assurance processes such as scrutinising work, joint observations and purposeful use of data. As a result, they have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, particularly when considering well-being provision and aspects of teaching. However, leaders do not always focus sufficiently on pupils' outcomes when evaluating. Overall, they set sensible improvement priorities. However, actions and success criteria are not always incisive enough to ensure that staff are clear about their responsibility in order to realise strategic priorities successfully. Leaders have addressed many of the recommendations from the last inspection suitably.

Leaders respond appropriately to a number of national priorities, such as mitigating the effect of poverty on pupils' achievement and introducing Curriculum for Wales. They are passionate about ensuring equal access to curricular experiences for pupils from low-income households. For example, they ensure that all pupils have access to enrichment activities, such as musical instrument lessons and educational visits. Leaders share information with parents appropriately.

Governors are supportive and challenge leaders appropriately. They visit the school regularly and take part in a wide range of self-evaluation activities. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The headteacher and business manager, along with the governors, manage resources carefully, including identifying alternative sources of funding, such as external grants. They evaluate this expenditure appropriately. They also work effectively with local authority officers, where appropriate, for example to produce an agreed recovery plan to address the budget deficit.

The school is developing a culture of professional learning successfully. There is a wide range of professional learning opportunities that link relevantly to whole-school priorities. The programme has focused appropriately on teaching and learning and is beginning to have an effect on what happens in lessons, for example the way in which teachers interact with pupils and develop their speaking skills.

The school is a lead partner in an initial teacher education partnership. Staff have benefitted from the opportunity to work with other schools and mentors are given beneficial opportunities to develop professionally and mentor trainees. Leaders work purposefully with other schools, for example to provide an international languages curriculum for the cluster schools.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Although the school is in a financial deficit, leaders and governors have an appropriate understanding of their financial situation, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report refers to different quantities and proportions, e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| nearly all = | with very few exceptions |
| most = | 90% or more |
| many = | 70% or more |
| a majority = | over 60% |
| half = | 50% |
| around half = | close to 50% |
| a minority = | below 40% |
| few = | below 20% |
| very few = | less than 10% |

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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

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