



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Rhosnesni  
Rhosnesni Lane  
Wrexham  
LL13 9ET**

**Date of inspection: November 2018**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Rhosnesni

Rhosnesni High School is an English-medium 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive school maintained by Wrexham County Borough Council. The school is situated in the east of Wrexham. Since the last inspection in March 2013, the number of pupils has decreased from 980 to 688.

Around a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national average of 16.4%. A similar proportion live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The proportion of pupils that have a special educational need is 27%, which is higher than the national average of 22.9%. Around 6% of pupils have statements of special educational needs. This figure is higher than the average of 2.2% for Wales as a whole. The school has resourced provision for pupils with both specific and moderate learning difficulties.

Around 12% of pupils have English as an additional language, and a similar proportion come from a minority ethnic background. Only a very few pupils are fluent in Welsh.

The headteacher took up his post in June 2018 after a period of significant changes to the senior leadership of the school. The senior team consists of a deputy and two assistant headteachers.

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

After a period of significant turbulence, the school has made recent rapid improvements in some important aspects of its work under the leadership of the new headteacher. The changes that he has instigated have greatly improved staff morale, pupil attitudes and community engagement. In particular, new strategies adopted by the school have led to substantial improvements in classroom behaviour. There remain, however, some important areas for improvement, for example in the standards that pupils achieve and their rates of attendance.

Recently, the headteacher has established a clear vision and ethos for the school, based on raised expectations and aspirations. Most pupils now behave well in lessons and the majority show positive attitudes to learning. However, pupils do not make enough progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Since last year, the school has refined leadership roles and responsibilities and strengthened how collaboratively and effectively staff at all levels carry out their roles. Leaders now have a much clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is beginning to have a clear impact on many aspects of the school's work. However, there are still important areas that require improvement, including the quality of teaching and assessment and how effectively leaders carry out their roles.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Raise standards at key stage 4 and improve the progress that pupils make in developing their skills, especially literacy, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT)
- R2 Improve attendance
- R3 Strengthen leadership, in particular how well leaders plan for improvement and hold staff to account
- R4 Improve the effectiveness of teaching and assessment
- R5 Address the health and safety issue identified during the inspection

## **What happens next**

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main findings

### **Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

In lessons, the majority of pupils make suitable progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a few cases, pupils make strong progress, such as in design technology where pupils develop a secure understanding of the process of thermosetting when designing an mp3 amplifier. The majority of pupils demonstrate suitable recall of their prior learning, and around half apply their understanding successfully to new contexts, for example when they use their understanding of proportion to adapt recipes for different numbers of people. In a minority of instances, however, pupils make limited progress. This is because they lack sufficient independence and resilience in their learning or because teachers provide them with undemanding activities.

Around half of pupils contribute suitably to discussion activities, using subject specific terms appropriately. A very few express their ideas thoughtfully and articulately, for example when considering the impact of social media. However, around half of pupils are reluctant to engage in class discussion and provide only brief, underdeveloped responses. A minority of pupils use a limited vocabulary and find it difficult to express their ideas clearly.

A majority of pupils read aloud with suitable fluency. They locate relevant information from a range of sources and can, for example, make appropriate observations about characters in literary texts. Around half of pupils can identify specific features of written techniques such as persuasive writing and a minority use inference and deduction well, for example when investigating the identity of Jack the Ripper in history. Overall, however, pupils do not have a sufficient range of reading strategies to use when faced with unfamiliar words. A minority do not select relevant information carefully enough and rely too much on copying. They make overly simplistic observations and frequently misunderstand the meaning of texts. More able pupils do not develop their higher-order reading skills well enough.

In the majority of cases, pupils' spelling and punctuation are suitably accurate and they use subject terminology appropriately in their writing. Around half of pupils produce suitably structured extended writing, such as descriptions of living conditions in towns during the industrial revolution. A very few write at length fluently, using varied sentence structure and punctuation to good effect. For example, they construct an engaging and empathetic account of the experience of undertaking your first journey on an aeroplane.

Around half of pupils, however, do not demonstrate sufficient control in their writing. They are inconsistent in their use of tense, make inappropriate language choices and do not match the tone of their writing well enough to their purpose or audience. They do not structure extended writing well enough or they produce brief, underdeveloped responses. A minority make frequent, basic errors in spelling and punctuation. In particular, more able pupils do not use a wide enough range of sentence structure, punctuation or vocabulary.

The majority of pupils have sound basic number skills. They use these skills appropriately across the curriculum, for example when they analyse voting patterns in 1930s Germany or predict the percentage yield of a product from a chemical reaction. They construct graphs appropriately, although in a few instances they do not interpret the information represented in these graphs accurately. A minority use their numeracy skills suitably to solve problems.

When given the opportunity, pupils demonstrate suitable ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, they use spreadsheets appropriately to analyse the results of questionnaires as part of the skills challenge certificate. However, overall, pupils do not develop their ICT skills well enough across the curriculum. Pupils develop their creativity suitably across the curriculum, such as when they create a sculpture to represent a key subject term in the style of Anthony Caro. A minority of pupils achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh. However, overall, pupils make limited progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

At key stage 4, performance in most key indicators has not compared well with that in other similar schools over the last four years. This includes the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, and the capped points score. The proportion of pupils achieving five grades at A\*-A improved in 2018, and now compares well with the average for similar schools. The performance of boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals compares poorly to the averages for these groups of pupils in similar schools.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement**

The school has been successful in making recent rapid improvements to many aspects of pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning, especially pupils' engagement and behaviour in lessons. However, there remain some important aspects that require improvement, such as pupils' attendance.

In most cases, relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Many pupils feel safe and supported at school. Most behave well in lessons and are respectful of their teachers and their peers. They understand the value of engaging well with their learning and contribute effectively to a positive learning environment.

The majority of pupils are enthusiastic learners and respond well to challenging tasks. They maintain their concentration and listen carefully to their teachers and their peers. These pupils work effectively in pairs and groups to support each other's learning. A minority of pupils, however, lack independence and resilience and lose concentration too easily. In a few instances, pupils' work is often incomplete or poorly presented.

Pupils value the opportunity to participate in a suitable range of lunchtime clubs and after-school activities, such as judo, swimming and the school choir. A few pupils act as 'Young Sports Leaders' and organise football and netball tournaments with local primary schools. Year 7 pupils lead assemblies for Year 6 pupils during transition days. These activities contribute successfully to these pupils' personal development. In addition, pupils value highly the peer mentor scheme, where older pupils are trained to support pupils of all ages. This contributes well to the leadership skills of those pupils involved and helps to promote overall pupil wellbeing successfully.

Attendance rates declined substantially in 2016 and 2017, and compare poorly to those in similar schools. This has a negative impact on pupil progress. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals in particular is well below that of this group of pupils in similar schools. Persistent absence has increased since 2015 and is high when compared to levels in similar schools.

The school has recently taken steps to increase the level of pupil involvement in decision-making. The school council is beginning to contribute appropriately to the life of the school. For example, it has shared its opinions regarding the quality of pupil toilets and school rules about the use of mobile phones. However, overall, pupil involvement in decision-making is at an early stage of development.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement**

Nearly all teachers form positive working relationships with their classes. In the majority of cases, teachers structure their lessons carefully in order to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. They use a variety of approaches and a range of carefully prepared resources in order to engage pupils' interest. They know their pupils well, and use this understanding to plan tasks that are matched appropriately to pupils' ability. In these lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and use questioning suitably to assess pupils' understanding.

In a minority of instances, however, teaching is not consistently effective enough. In these lessons, teachers do not match activities carefully enough to pupils' ability. They set tasks that are either insufficiently demanding or overly challenging. In addition, they do not secure an effective pace of learning, either because too much of the lesson is taken up with lengthy teacher explanation or because pupils are given insufficient time to consolidate their learning. These factors limit the progress that pupils make and restrict their independence in learning. In these lessons, teachers do not use questioning well enough to develop pupils' thinking. In a few instances, teachers accept too readily work of a poor standard and limited contributions to discussion activities.

The majority of teachers monitor pupils' progress during lessons suitably, and offer useful verbal feedback to address any misunderstandings. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers do not monitor carefully enough how well pupils are maintaining focus and concentration. In the majority of cases, teachers provide pupils with helpful advice and guidance as to how they can improve their work. In a few cases, this helps pupils to make substantial improvements. Overall, however, there is too much inconsistency in how teachers ensure that pupils make improvements in light of their feedback. Furthermore, self and peer assessment activities are used indiscriminately and are often not sufficiently well planned. This limits their impact and, in a few instances, is an ineffective use of lesson time. In a few cases, teacher feedback is overgenerous or does not identify mistakes or misconceptions clearly enough.

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils. At key stage 4, the school provides a suitable variety of courses. It works appropriately with the local college to offer a wide range of vocational qualifications. However, the school does not allow sufficient time for religious education at key stage 4. In addition, it does not provide sufficient Welsh language provision for a very few pupils.

The school uses a suitable range of information to identify pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. It provides appropriate interventions to support these pupils. A few subject areas plan a range of valuable opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their numeracy skills. However, planning for and co-ordination of the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills are underdeveloped. Provision for the cross-curricular development of pupils' ICT skills is at a very early stage.

A few departments provide pupils with suitable opportunities to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. For example, pupils study the life of Saint David in religious education. Overall, however, this aspect of the school's work is underdeveloped.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement**

The school provides a generally supportive and caring environment that has a positive impact on the wellbeing and attitudes to learning of many pupils. However, arrangements for monitoring pupils' wellbeing and academic progress have, over time, had insufficient impact on pupil outcomes.

The school has recently established a new system for recording and monitoring pupils' academic progress. This is beginning to help leaders to identify those pupils who are underachieving and require support. However, these improvements are very recent, and, over time, systems for tracking pupil progress have had insufficient impact.

The school records appropriately incidents of poor behaviour. However, leaders do not identify clearly enough the impact of the strategies deployed. This limits how well the school can tailor provision to match pupils' individual needs. The school has not responded consistently robustly enough to address issues regarding racist or homophobic bullying.

Leaders have recently strengthened the school's procedures for monitoring pupil attendance. There are now beneficial systems in place to reward good attendance and the school is beginning to respond more swiftly to poor attendance. These improvements have resulted in recent improvements to rates of attendance. However, over time, the school has not made enough impact on pupils' attendance, especially that of pupils eligible for free school meals.

There is sound provision for pupils with additional learning needs. The school provides a wide range of helpful interventions for pupils in need of support. The Nurture Centre provides a safe and inclusive environment for vulnerable pupils. The two learning resource centres provide suitable support for pupils who have hearing impairment or speech, language and communication difficulties. Individual education plans include useful strategies to help teachers support pupils with additional learning needs. This information is shared suitably with teaching staff. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not use this information well enough when they plan lessons.

The recently-introduced Success Centre provides generally appropriate support for pupils at risk of exclusion. This includes a basic skills curriculum and, for a minority of its key stage 4 pupils, alternative provision outside school. The pastoral support plans for pupils in the centre enable the school to monitor their attendance and



engagement. However, these plans do not include some important information, such as parental agreements, personal targets or plans for reintegration into mainstream education.

Reports to parents are generally appropriate. In the majority of cases, they include suitable subject-specific targets, although in a minority of instances these targets are not sufficiently clear or challenging. Key stage 3 interim reports do not provide parents with clear enough information regarding their child's progress.

The school has suitable arrangements to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Tutor sessions, assemblies and 'Stand Down Days' provide pupils with appropriate information and opportunities to reflect on issues such as human rights, healthy relationships and the dangers of substance misuse. The school works well with external agencies such as the police, Welsh Women's Aid and the Youth Justice Service to support this provision. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting, social and cultural activities outside of lessons, such as the girls' football club and charity fundraising events such as 'Readathon'. The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. However, a health and safety issue regarding pupils attending off-site provision was brought to the school's attention during the inspection.

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

Since his appointment in June 2018, the headteacher has led the school with verve and enthusiasm. He has promoted successfully a clear vision based on high aspirations for all pupils. This has been embraced by staff, pupils and parents, and has brought about notable improvements in the school's ethos.

Over time, the school's planning for improvement has not been effective enough in ensuring good attendance or in improving outcomes for pupils. The new headteacher has quickly developed a realistic understanding of the quality of teaching, standards and behaviour across the school. Together with governors, he has set the immediate priorities of improving pupils' attendance, attitudes and aspirations. In a short period of time, he has galvanised the staff and driven rapid improvements in behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning. This has allowed teachers to develop positive working relationships with pupils and to deliver their lessons more effectively.

The headteacher has redistributed responsibilities within the senior leadership team appropriately. Senior leaders are developing a sound understanding of their new roles and lines of accountability are now suitably clear. Senior leaders are visible around the school and very supportive of staff, in particular in preventing or dealing with pupil behaviour issues.

Line management meetings focus suitably on standards and the effectiveness of teaching. However, leaders do not identify actions arising from these meetings clearly or precisely enough. This restricts their ability to hold staff to account. The headteacher has introduced appropriate new arrangements to support and challenge middle leaders, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on how effectively they carry out their roles.

The governors are supportive of the school and now understand its strengths and areas for development suitably. They are beginning to challenge the school robustly on its performance. Through a recent review of their governance framework, governors now focus more clearly on defined areas such as performance and quality of teaching when holding leaders to account. However, the governing body has not ensured that the statutory requirements to provide religious education for all pupils or suitable opportunities for pupils to learn Welsh up to the age of 16 have been met.

The school has appropriate arrangements for managing the performance of staff. These have recently been strengthened and objectives correspond to the school's priorities. Targets are suitably measurable and support professional learning appropriately. Leaders are beginning to develop appropriate professional learning opportunities for staff that focus suitably on specific areas for improvement. The school has started to provide staff with opportunities to observe and share good practice.

The school's self-evaluation systems include appropriate activities to gather first-hand evidence such as lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and informal visits to lessons by leaders. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, these procedures have been strengthened beneficially. Leaders at all levels are developing their understanding of how to evaluate teaching in light of its impact on pupils' progress. Senior leaders have identified clear priorities for improvement that match closely self-evaluation findings. Subject leaders are beginning to develop a sound understanding of the actions required to improve the effectiveness of their department areas. However there is too much variation in how precisely they plan for improvement.

The headteacher, business manager and governors manage the school's expenditure appropriately. The facilities are of a good standard and well maintained. The school makes appropriate use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant, to support vulnerable pupils. However, this has not had enough impact on the attainment or attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

## Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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