



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones  
Pentrefelin  
Amlwch  
LL68 9TH**

**Date of inspection: October 2018**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones is a bilingual community school for pupils aged between 11 and 18, which is maintained by Anglesey local authority. There are 509 pupils on roll with 75 pupils in the sixth form. During the last inspection, there were 647 pupils on roll with 113 pupils in the sixth form.

The school serves a catchment area of about 53 square miles to the north east from Traeth Coch on the east coast of Anglesey, through Brynteg, Llanerchymedd and Mynydd Mechell to Cemlyn Bay on the north west coast.

Approximately 15.2% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national figure of 16.4%. The school has 24% of pupils on its special educational needs register, which is higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is 2%, which is also very close to the national average.

A little over half of pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken and 77% of pupils are fluent in Welsh. A very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The headteacher has been in post since 2013. Following a recent reorganisation, the senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and one assistant headteacher.

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

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones is a very caring and inclusive community. The headteacher and all staff convey a culture of “putting the child first at all times”. Most pupils’ behaviour is excellent and they are respectful and courteous to their teachers, and to visitors and their peers. Most persevere with their tasks successfully. Many pupils are natural and fluent speakers in both languages and these pupils’ literacy skills are strong. In general, many pupils make sound progress in many subjects.

Effective leadership has led to robust standards of wellbeing and a high level of care and support for children. However, it has not ensured a consistently high level of quality in teaching.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve standards, especially for more able pupils
- R2 Strengthen the quality of teaching across the school
- R3 Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders so that they are fully accountable for all aspects of provision and standards in their areas of responsibility

## **What happens next**

### **Not in follow-up**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

On their journey through school, many pupils make sound progress in their understanding, subject skills and bilingualism. In many lessons, pupils recall previous learning correctly and build on it beneficially.

Most pupils are very respectful when listening to the teacher and their peers speaking, and follow instructions very carefully. Many pupils are natural and fluent speakers in both languages, with the majority contributing sensibly and carefully to discussions. A few pupils of higher ability use rich vocabulary and mature expression and syntax skilfully. For example, in English lessons, they are able to justify their choice of persuasion, exemplification and analysis techniques effectively when discussing social media. Most pupils in the sixth form demonstrate very well-developed thinking and oral skills, for example when discussing and analysing the context of quotations from the legend of Branwen in Welsh lessons.

Many pupils are confident readers. They distil relevant information from various sources successfully and analyse texts effectively, and come to sensible conclusions. For example, pupils in religious education lessons consider successfully the various viewpoints linked to the terrorist attack in Manchester. Many pupils respond skilfully to the content and style of literary texts, for example when comparing poems that celebrate the success of the Wales football team in the Euro 2016 championships. In a few lessons, where there are valuable opportunities to develop analytical and reasoning skills, pupils make very strong progress. For example, in English lessons, pupils compare two poems, namely "In Flanders" and "Who's for the game?" effectively in order to be able to consider the propaganda that attracted soldiers to go to fight in the war.

Many pupils write extensively for a wide range of purposes and audiences, for example in order to give an opinion on the life and work of Martin Luther King in religious education lessons. A few write creatively and skilfully, and use descriptive language and turns of phrase confidently in both languages. However, a minority of pupils make basic spelling, punctuation and grammar errors in both languages. In addition, a minority use spoken language when writing formal extended work and use English vocabulary when writing in Welsh, and vice versa.

Overall, a majority apply their number skills appropriately in subjects across the curriculum. Many pupils analyse data correctly and produce suitable graphs and tables to show their results, for example when comparing the climate of Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog in geography lessons. However, a minority of pupils do not apply their number skills successfully in order to solve problems in relevant subjects.

Many pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately to word process, create presentations and handle data in a few subjects across the curriculum. However, they do not develop their higher ICT skills, for example by handling spreadsheets and data bases in different subjects.

Pupils' creativity is a strong feature. There are numerous examples of pupils developing their creative skills across a range of subjects. For example, in technology lessons, pupils use various sawing and drilling machines, manual work and ICT programmes in order to design and create African masks. Pupils in food technology lessons produce a video blog, which gives instructions on how to cook various foods such as pheasant bake. They also develop their physical skills effectively, for example when creating effective flow patterns into a combination of shapes and balance in gymnastics lessons.

The performance of key stage 4 pupils in many important indicators has fluctuated over the last three years. Performance in the level 2 indicator including Welsh or English and mathematics has been strong for two of the last three years. The capped points score has also varied but has been lower than the average for similar schools for two of the last three years. Unverified results for 2018 suggest that pupils' performance in the above indicators is lower than in other similar schools.

The proportion of pupils that gain five GCSE A\*-A grades or equivalent has varied over time but overall it is lower than in similar schools.

Girls' performance over the last three years in the main indicators has compared favourably with similar schools. However, boys' outcomes and those of pupils who are eligible for free school meals are lower than the average for similar schools in many of the main indicators over the last three years.

Pupils with additional learning needs make very strong progress during their time at the school. No pupil has left the school without a qualification for over four years.

Pupils make mixed progress in their chosen subjects in the sixth form. Over time, pupils' performance in the level 3 threshold, the wider points score, and the proportion gaining three grades A\*-C is lower than in similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils gaining three grades A\*-A or equivalent is higher than in similar schools. Overall, many pupils develop their ability to handle complex matters skilfully when following their courses.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

An excellent feature of pupils at Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones is their positive attitudes towards school life and their education. They are respectful and courteous pupils, and commit themselves quietly and modestly to the life and work of the school. Most concentrate fully throughout lessons and persevere with their tasks successfully.

Most pupils demonstrate very good behaviour in lessons and around the school. They arrive at lessons promptly and settle quickly. They also work together successfully and show respect for other people's contributions and are considerate of different viewpoints.

Standards of wellbeing are high in the school. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and know to whom to turn if they need any support. Most of them feel confident that teachers and other staff deal very well with any problems that arise.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They appreciate greatly the range of learning experiences and extra-curricular activities that are available in morning sessions, during lunchtime and after school. Most pupils understand clearly the importance of eating and drinking healthily.

Pupils at the school are willing to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, older pupils support younger pupils effectively with their Welsh language skills. In addition, they lead multi-sports coaching sessions during lunchtimes. The school council has an appropriate effect on a few aspects of the school's work, for example contributing to installing water fountains inside and outside. However, overall, the pupil's voice does not have a strong enough influence on decisions about the school's direction, including aspects of teaching and learning.

Rates of attendance have improved positively over time, and compare very well to those in similar schools.

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

Most teachers in Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones succeed in establishing an inclusive and homely environment in their classes. They have sound subject knowledge and manage pupils' behaviour well.

In the majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They plan activities that challenge pupils appropriately and stimulate them to achieve well. In these lessons, teachers develop a pace of learning that supports rapid progress.

In a minority of lessons, teachers use skilful questioning techniques to probe and develop pupils' understanding. In a few lessons, the teaching has excellent features. The teaching is enthusiastic and creative. Pupils are inspired to persevere and, as a result, they make significant progress from their starting points.

In a minority of lessons however, teachers' expectations are not high enough, especially in terms of more able pupils. Activities do not challenge pupils appropriately and tasks are often too repetitive. In these lessons, teachers do not plan activities that match pupils' needs and abilities well enough. There is an inappropriate pace to these lessons. In a few lessons, teachers' presentations are too long and this limits progress and the opportunities that pupils have to develop their independent skills.

Many teachers monitor their pupils' progress regularly throughout the lesson by circling the class effectively. They also offer constructive advice on pupils' work and explain clearly what needs to be done to improve. A few teachers, however, do not check pupils' understanding in sufficient detail in lessons, nor do they provide enough opportunities for them to respond productively to comments in order to improve the quality of their work.

School leaders plan carefully in order to meet pupils' needs and aspirations through the medium of Welsh and English. The school has developed effective partnerships with its feeder primary schools. As a result, pupils settle into Year 7 quickly and build on their knowledge and skills effectively as they transfer to the school.

The school offers its pupils a worthwhile range of relevant subject choices. It works successfully with other schools and a local further education college to offer a wide provision of courses in key stages 4 and 5. This provision includes a wide range of GCSE subjects as well as opportunities to follow vocational courses in subjects such as engineering, construction and hospitality and catering. This responds purposefully to the requirements of the local labour market. The school works closely with local employers in order to provide useful work experience for pupils.

The school provides valuable learning support in order to help pupils with special educational needs. However, the school's arrangements for meeting the needs of the most able pupils, including the new learning programmes, have not been established firmly.

The school offers a valuable programme of extra-curricular experiences that enrich pupils' experiences outside the classroom. Provision includes a full programme of beneficial sports and cultural activities. The "Challenge Week" in the summer term offers varied and rich experiences for pupils across the school. For example, Year 7 pupils have an opportunity to raise tents and camp and undertake a number of varied outdoor activities.

The school has planned in detail to develop pupils' skills. These plans have been woven carefully into the new learning programmes. The majority of subjects offer valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. Valuable provision is offered to seek to improve pupils' bilingual reading skills in key stage 3. This plan is further strengthened by the mature and valuable contribution of the school's older pupils.

The school's purposeful plans offer suitable opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills in a minority of relevant subjects across the curriculum. The school also has beneficial plans to develop pupils' digital skills. However, this provision is not consistent across the school. The school's arrangements for implementing the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification are an effective means of developing pupils' skills in key stages 4 and 5.

The school's arrangements for promoting Welshness and fostering pupils' Welsh language skills are appropriate. The school's language policy ensures smooth language progression between key stages 2 and 3 and, by the end of key stage 4, many pupils sit GCSE Welsh first language. However, the majority of pupils choose to study their subjects through the medium of English in key stages 4 and 5.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones is a close community that offers caring support and guidance for pupils based on tolerance and respect. Putting the child first is core to the school's vision, work and ethos. The school has an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, which successfully promotes healthy eating and drinking, as well as pupils' wellbeing and progress. As a result, pupils' behaviour is excellent and they show respect to each other and to others.

Pupils with learning and physical needs receive valuable support. Provision for them ensures full access to the school's curriculum, where appropriate, and enables them to make sound progress. Effective use is made of assistants as well as sixth-form students to provide beneficial support and intervention for these pupils. Assistants are usefully assigned as mentors to each pupil with needs, and regular mentoring meetings are held. Rigorous, purposeful and personal annual reviews are held for pupils with individual additional learning needs, and pupils and parents play a full part in the process.

The school has an effective progress-tracking system. Beneficial use is made of this information by the learning champion in co-operation with the extended leadership team to identify pupils that need support and to provide purposeful intervention for pupils who are underachieving. A valuable element is the school's method of sharing the information about individuals' learning styles. Useful guidance is given to all pupils about their choices and learning pathways. However, the school is not incisive enough in evaluating the outcome of tracking, as well as the effect and suitability of all the interventions.

The inclusion leader and the year leaders monitor and track pupils' behaviour and attendance effectively through useful structures. Grades for effort, attendance percentages and information from pupils, staff and parents are used purposefully to ensure suitable support for individuals. Provision in the 'Hafan Hybu' inclusion room by the assistant and external agencies offers useful emotional and social support to vulnerable pupils.

The school communicates effectively with parents, for example with successful electronic methods that informs them about their child's homework. Worthwhile reports to parents provide valuable information on their child's strengths and useful subject specific targets.

A valuable outcome of the school's work as a professional learning community has been the "Noticeboard", which ensures the sharing of comprehensive information, and very effective co-operation between specific staff in order to support individual pupils. In doing so, there is purposeful progression and co-ordination in order to ensure the best support for the child.

The school offers appropriate provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through assemblies, a personal and social education programme and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Provision is enriched by links with agencies and services such as 'Mind', 'Gobaith Môn' and a police community support officer. Provision offers useful opportunities for pupils to increase their fitness and understanding of how to live healthily.

Through the work of the school council, pupils have an opportunity to influence decisions about the school's environment. However, the current systems do not allow pupils to have a full influence on the school's wider life and work, for example what and how they learn.

The safeguarding requirements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher is a passionate, sincere and energetic leader. He has a clear vision that is based on ensuring that the "child is put first at all times". By working inclusively with all staff, this vision has permeated through all aspects of the school's work. This has led to a strong sense of communal pride among staff and pupils. The headteacher's clear leadership has ensured high attendance percentages and supporting pupils to reach their goal by fostering positive attitudes to learning.

The senior leadership team work closely to support the headteacher in order to promote wellbeing and pride in a caring and familial ethos.

Recently, the school has restructured to improve the consistency of management across the areas of learning and to respond to the financial deficit. The senior leadership team's responsibilities are clear and understood by all. An additional member has been appointed to focus specifically on improving standards of learning and the quality of teaching. Although the responsibilities are clear, they have not been distributed equally in terms of line management responsibilities and this limits their time to address important aspects in the school in full.

Since the restructuring, middle leaders understand their roles and are developing appropriately as leaders. They are developing their understanding of their responsibility to raise standards of learning and teaching in their specific areas. However, middle leaders' effectiveness in fulfilling these duties varies.

The governing body is passionate in terms of its care about the school's interests. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They play the role of a critical friend that supports and challenges the school effectively. The school has taken appropriate steps to manage the deficit but it is still high. However, the school has succeeded in maintaining a full curriculum, including a wide range of vocational options in key stage 4. This includes close co-operation with other partners to deliver a wide range of options in key stage 5. The school makes beneficial use of grants to support the achievement of the school's most vulnerable learners.

The school has strengthened its quality assurance programme, which is a sound basis for its self-evaluation and improvement planning processes. This programme is implemented consistently across the school. The school makes effective use of a wide range of direct evidence in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement, for example detailed analysis of performance data, lesson observations, scrutiny of books, and forums to seek pupils' views. This has a positive effect in terms of reviewing departmental performance and monitoring subsequent progress. The areas for development derive clearly from the findings of evaluation at school level and the areas of learning and experience. In addition, the assessment periods are consistent across the areas of learning.

The school's improvement plans and those for the areas of learning and experience pay appropriate attention to pupils' progress and to improving standards of teaching. The whole-school priorities are suitable and the improvement plans for the areas of learning and experience respond appropriately. However, the actions in the areas for development are not always clear enough in stating how pupils' standards can be raised and the quality of teaching improved. The school has robust and clear processes in order to monitor progress against the priorities.

Performance management objectives link clearly to whole-school priorities. The targets are measurable and clear actions are included to support teachers' professional learning.

There is a supportive ethos and culture of supporting professional learning in the school. Teachers have an opportunity to contribute in sessions on the sharing of good practice in the school and the county. The work of the professional learning working groups has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and is beginning to have an effect on the standard of teaching. For example, use of the homework app has been developed by one of the working groups in order to communicate directly with parents.

There are useful opportunities to work with teachers in other schools on the island in a county network called “Camu”, in order to learn more and share good practice about methods to improve standards of learning and teaching. In addition, some teachers lead on specific areas of the curriculum in the county and regionally, for example as religious education and food technology teachers.

The headteacher and governors manage resources and expenditure carefully. They have a purposeful funding strategy, in which there is a close link between decisions on expenditure and the school’s priorities for improvement. The school has a current financial deficit that is licenced by the local authority. The school makes beneficial use of grants to support the achievement of the school’s vulnerable pupils.

## 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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