

Best practice

Ysgol Comins Coch, Ceredigion

Number of pupils: 170

Age range: 4-11 years

Date of Estyn inspection: October 2011



Area of sector-leading practice which has been identified during inspection and relates to a particular quality indicator:

Key Question: 1

Quality indicator: Standards

Aspect: Welsh Development

Context and background to sector-leading practice:

Ysgol Comins Coch is situated in the village of Comins Coch, two miles north east of Aberystwyth, in the county of Ceredigion. Just over 9% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is significantly below the county and national average.

English is the main language of nearly all pupils and no pupils speak Welsh as their home language. Welsh is taught as a second language at the school.

Description of nature of strategy or activity:

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' Welsh language skills

and promoting the use of Welsh across the curriculum. It aims to instil in its pupils a sense of pride in Wales and its language. As part of this approach, the school teaches aspects of history, geography, religious education, art and physical education through the medium of Welsh. As a result, pupils learn a broad range of vocabulary and develop and use a wider range of sentence patterns in the context of these subject areas.

The school uses an immersion programme to develop the children's confidence in using their Welsh language skills in all areas of learning. This programme takes place for extended periods each term, but particularly during the summer term. During these periods, the school teaches all subjects, with the exception of English, either through Welsh or bilingually in every class. Pupils are rewarded for their efforts in using their Welsh with "Dysgwr yr Wythnos" awards.

The Athrawes Fro service provides particularly good support to the school. It targets support to groups of pupils requiring extra help with their Welsh language development. The progress of these pupils is reviewed on a termly basis.

Pupils communicate their needs, feelings and experiences confidently and effectively through the medium of Welsh. Welsh oracy is a priority with all staff using Welsh as the main language of incidental conversation throughout the school. Pupils' reading and writing skills develop naturally as their oral skills improve and, by the end of key stage two, they read and write with accuracy and often at length in a range of subjects.

"Throughout the school, there is an extremely positive attitude to learning Welsh and embracing Welsh culture"

The school provides pupils with a broad range of experiences to use and improve their Welsh language skills. For example, staff organise residential visits for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to Gwersyll Llangrannog and Gwersyll Caerdydd, where they meet children from Welsh-medium schools. This ensures that the school's pupils hear Welsh being spoken at all times and encourages them to use the Welsh language socially.

The school has a flourishing 'Clwb yr Urdd', which is held weekly for children in key stage 2. It provides a range of activities including sport, cookery, art, quizzes and games. The pupils are also encouraged to take part in the Urdd eisteddfod, and many have been successful in a variety of national competitions.

Pupils who are latecomers to the school are encouraged to attend the Welsh Language Centre in Aberystwyth. This centre assists these pupils to learn and develop basic Welsh language skills quickly. As a result, pupils are able to integrate fully into all aspects of the school's life and work and benefit from the school's Welsh ethos. Learning support assistants also provide specific help to these pupils as they cope with the demands of learning a new language.

The school gives particularly strong emphasis to developing pupils' awareness and understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. As well as learning about Wales' history and geography, pupils learn about Welsh artists, composers, authors and poets. Pupils learn traditional Welsh songs and dances, and celebrate St David's Day with an eisteddfod and a Welsh tea.

Members of the classroom staff lacking the confidence to converse in Welsh have opportunities to improve their Welsh language skills by enrolling on Welsh Government led sabbatical courses. This has had a significant impact on the school's Welsh ethos as all members of classroom staff are able to speak to one another and to pupils in Welsh.

Teachers have developed skills and promoted good practice through their involvement with local authority and national moderation panels

for Cymraeg ail iaith. Teachers from other schools have visited Comins Coch to observe good practice. In addition, a member of staff was seconded to the local authority to help create a portfolio of resources to be used by schools for developing the teaching of Welsh through other subjects.

In response to parents' interest, the school provides weekly Welsh language lessons for parents, which have proved to be very successful. Parents' participation in these classes has had a positive effect on their children's attitudes to learning Welsh, while parents are enthusiastic about being able to support their children's learning at home.

As a result of the sustained focus on developing pupils' Welsh language skills, pupils are suitably prepared to take advantage of the opportunity to transfer to either a Welsh-medium or primarily English-medium secondary school at the end of key stage two.

What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?

Throughout the school, there is an extremely positive attitude to learning Welsh and embracing Welsh culture. Pupils and parents regard the acquisition of two languages as being a significant advantage for their future.

In 2011, in end-of-key-stage-two teacher assessments, all pupils achieved at least level 4 in Welsh second language, with 58% achieving level 5 and 11% achieving level 6. These results were significantly higher than local authority and Wales averages and represent a continuing improvement from previous years.