1st September 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are pleased to share with you the most recent Estyn report for Ysgol Penglais. Eight Estyn inspectors visited the school from 16th to the 21st of May 2022 and the report was published on 20th July. Please see the full report attached to this email or click on the link for the report [Ysgol Penglais | Estyn (gov.wales)](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6674047).

There have been a few changes to the way Estyn report. The main change is that they no longer give overall judgements for the school or for various aspects of the school’s provision; they only give a written report identifying strengths and areas for development. Estyn does use words that have quantities and proportions linked to them as indicated below. This will help the reader understand the report more fully.

Overall, we are very pleased with the outcome of the report. It recognizes the ‘strong culture of improvement’ that has developed in the school, and identifies that ‘Effective leadership and a culture of trust has strengthened the teaching and learning experiences at the school over time.’ Professional learning is recognized as a significant strength of the school with ‘the continuous focus on improving practice within the school…having a notable impact on the quality of teaching and learning.’ ‘This has resulted in consistently high-quality teaching that leads to secure development in pupils’ subject knowledge and skills.’ The inspectors identified that ‘A particular strength of the school is the way in which pupils develop their thinking skills. Many develop their ability to think deeply, persevere and solve problems well.’

They have identified that the provision to develop pupils’ literacy skills is a notable strength with leaders having provided ‘highly effective professional learning to staff on how to teach aspects of literacy. As a result, there is a wide range of worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy, reading and extended writing skills in many subjects.’

Estyn inspectors recognized that ‘Strong positive working relationships between pupils and staff are a consistent and important characteristic of Ysgol Penglais.’ They recognize that ‘Ysgol Penglais is a caring community, and staff know their pupils well… The school provides a supportive and caring environment. Leaders make important information about individual pupils available to all staff who use this sensitively to support pupils’ learning and well-being. As a result, many pupils, including those that have ALN, make good progress and enjoy school.’

Another notable strength is the school’s provision for pupils with additional learning needs. This includes students in the mainstream as well as students within the Learning Support Centre and the Hearing Resource Centre. The inspectors identified that ‘The school has a wide range of innovative programmes to support vulnerable pupils and has employed specific staff to strengthen this aspect of its provision.’

During the week, the inspectors witnessed what we see in our students on a daily basis: ‘Most pupils have mature attitudes towards their education and work with staff to ensure that the school is a calm and pleasant learning environment. Most behave well in lessons, and many have positive attitudes towards learning.’

They also recognized that the school is a safe environment for the students: ‘Most pupils feel safe and secure in school and feel well cared for by staff. Many pupils feel that they are free from bullying and know where to go if they need support. Many pupils feel the school is an inclusive environment and that it celebrated diversity in a positive manner.’

The students in the 6th Form ‘show maturity and positive attitudes towards their learning’ as well as ‘independence and ambition. They feel well supported by the school and prepared for the future. They appreciate the pastoral and academic support that the school provides.’

We are extremely proud that Estyn have identified two aspects of our work as examples of excellent practice to be shared with other schools across Wales. These are in relation to our professional learning programme and our work on implementing the new Curriculum for Wales.

Of course, there are areas for us to continue working on and we are pleased that these were already identified as part of our self-evaluation processes. Developing our Welsh ethos and opportunities for students to develop their Welsh language skills is an area of priority for the school. This goes hand in hand with recognizing the diversity within the school and celebrating the 34 different languages that are spoken at Penglais. Similarly, we will be working to improve the cross-curricular provision to support the development of pupils’ digital skills. As part of this, all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will now be having stand-alone Digital Skills and Computer Science lessons.

We were aware that we have not always been as effective as we can be in communicating with parents/guardians and students the actions that have been taken to address concerns raised, in particular in relation to cases of conflict or perceived bullying. We have now strengthened our processes and will make it a priority to feedback to parents/guardians, students and staff the actions that have been taken.

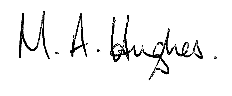
Similarly, our PSHE programme had been under review as we returned from Covid. This will now be taught as part of the PE and Wellbeing curriculum and dedicated lessons identified for each year group. The 6th Form will also have time built into their timetable on a Wednesday afternoon every fortnight for PSHCE lessons and Career talks.

There were two other elements mentioned under Recommendation 4: to control the noise in technology lessons and to review the signing in and out procedures for the 6th Form. There are actions in place to address these issues.

We are never complacent as a school and we now look forward to developing the school further in the journey towards excellence. In the meantime, we would like to thank all staff for their continued hard work and efforts to ensure that students receive the best learning and experiences possible. Well done and thank you also to students who work with the staff in the school to ensure that the school is the happy, ambitious and high-achieving school of our vision, where everyone is respected and valued. Finally, thank you to you as parents/guardians for your continued support. There will be an opportunity for parents/guardians to visit the school for curriculum evenings in early September and another opportunity to meet Governors in the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 25th October. We look forward to seeing you at these events.

Yours sincerely,

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Prof Jon Moorby Ms M Hughes

Chair of Governors Pennaeth / Headteacher

