



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

A report on

**Croesyceiliog School
Woodland Road
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2YB**

Date of inspection: January 2018

by

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

About Croesyceiliog School

Croesyceiliog School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in Cwmbran and maintained by Torfaen local authority. Most pupils come from the Croesyceiliog, Llanyrafon, Maendy and Pontnewydd districts of Cwmbran. There are currently 1,607 pupils on roll, including 259 in the sixth form. These figures are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

Around 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 17%. Around 16% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The proportion of pupils that have an additional learning need is 18% and 1% have a statement of special educational needs. Both of these figures are below the Welsh averages of, respectively, 21.5% and 2.2%. Most pupils are from a white, British background. There are very few pupils who are fluent in Welsh or have English as an additional language.

The headteacher has been in post since 2013. The senior leadership team currently consists of an acting deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, an acting assistant headteacher and a business manager.

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

Croesyceiliog School has a supportive and inclusive ethos. Pupils participate well in decision-making and a wide range of extra-curricular activities and have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy. Most pupils behave well in lessons and many engage positively in their learning. However, a minority of pupils are not resilient or independent enough in their learning, and a few pupils do not always behave maturely and respectfully as they move around the school. Rates of attendance are lower than in similar schools, and this has a negative impact on pupil progress.

In the majority of cases, teaching is engaging and effective and helps pupils to make sound progress in their lessons. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders have a clear and well-understood vision for how to improve the school and they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, there is too much variation in how effectively middle leaders evaluate their work and plan for improvement. This has limited the school's ability to secure consistent enough improvement in important areas of the school's work, such as key stage 4 outcomes, rates of attendance and the quality of teaching.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards at key stage 4, improve pupils' skills and develop their independence and resilience in learning
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching
- R3 Improve attendance
- R4 Strengthen leadership at all levels
- R5 Strengthen arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning, in particular the role played by middle leaders in this aspect of the school's work

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

In lessons, the majority of pupils make sound progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. They recall their prior learning well and apply their understanding successfully to new contexts. In geography, for example, pupils use their understanding of desertification and deforestation to explore the links between water and the carbon cycle.

The majority of pupils write with appropriate technical accuracy and demonstrate a suitable understanding of purpose and audience when producing written pieces in a range of formats. They adopt an appropriate style and make suitable language choices when, for example, writing a formal letter to the headteacher to suggest changes to the school or producing a biography of a family member. These pupils structure their extended writing appropriately. A few pupils write at length with notable fluency and sophistication, such as when they produce a mature and sensitive comparison of the imagery used in Wilfred Owen's 'Disabled' and 'Dulce et Decorum Est'.

A minority of pupils, however, make repeated basic errors in their writing. In particular, they often do not use punctuation and capital letters appropriately. These pupils do not structure their extended writing well enough and frequently produce written responses that are brief and underdeveloped. They do not have a firm enough grasp of purpose and audience, and consequently do not make appropriate or effective language choices in their writing.

Many pupils are able to locate and select relevant information from a range of texts confidently. The majority deploy successfully a range of reading strategies when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary. They are able to make appropriate inferences and deductions and can identify the key features of different text types. A few pupils have well-developed higher order reading skills. They are able, for example, to summarise, compare and categorise the various techniques used in a wide range of online advertisements.

The majority of pupils make appropriate contributions to class discussion and demonstrate a sound grasp of subject terminology. They participate effectively in pair or group discussions to share ideas and support each other's learning. A few pupils are highly articulate, and make thoughtful, perceptive and well-developed responses that are supported by confident use of a wide range of subject terms. A minority of pupils, however, are reluctant to engage in discussion work. They make only brief, underdeveloped contributions and do not listen carefully enough to other pupils.

The majority of pupils have sound number skills. They use these skills appropriately across the curriculum, such as when they construct and interpret graphs to compare the climate of two countries or the solubility of different substances. A minority of pupils, however, lack confidence in basic number work both in and outside of mathematics lessons. They are unable, for example, to calculate simple percentages or convert measurements. In general, pupils make appropriate use of information

and communication technology (ICT) to carry out simple tasks such as creating presentations and word processing. The majority of pupils are able to enter and amend basic formulae in spreadsheets, for example to calculate the profits made by a business. However, overall, pupils' ability to use and develop their ICT skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Across the curriculum, the majority of pupils demonstrate appropriate thinking and problem-solving skills, such as when they calculate how to split a restaurant bill fairly or plan the cost of a journey. They develop their creativity well, for example in design technology, where they experiment enthusiastically to create their own recipe for a healthy dip. However, the thinking skills of a minority of pupils are underdeveloped. They do not use their own initiative well enough to solve problems or attempt challenging tasks and rely too heavily on their teachers' guidance.

A few pupils are confident in speaking and writing in Welsh. However, only around half of pupils gain a level 2 qualification. Overall, pupils' understanding of, and confidence in, using the Welsh language is underdeveloped.

Over the last four years, pupils' performance at key stage 4 does not compare well to that in similar schools. Between 2014 and 2016, performance improved slightly in many indicators. However, there was a substantial decline in many indicators in 2017, including the capped points score and the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE or equivalent grades at A*-A has fluctuated in recent years, but has generally been below the average for this indicator in similar schools.

The performance of both boys and girls at key stage 4 has been below that of boys and girls in similar schools in most indicators in recent years. The performance of pupils eligible for free schools meals has fluctuated, but has been below the national average for this group of pupils in the majority of indicators. At the end of Year 11, many pupils remain in full time education either in the school or a further education college.

Sixth form pupils demonstrate strong levels of maturity and independence in their learning and show enthusiasm and resilience when undertaking demanding activities. They recall their prior learning confidently and express their understanding both in writing and verbally with clarity, making appropriate use of a wide range of subject terminology. In the sixth form, performance in the majority of indicators over the last four years has largely been in line with that of similar schools. The average wider points score of sixth form pupils has generally compared well to levels in similar schools over this period, although it declined substantially in 2017.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils behave well in lessons and many engage positively in their learning. Many listen attentively and respectfully to the views of others in class discussion and pair or group work. These pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work. However, a minority of pupils do not maintain their concentration well enough throughout their lessons. These pupils do not listen carefully enough to their teachers or their peers and do not demonstrate sufficient independence and resilience in their learning. In a few instances, there are notable amounts of missing, incomplete or poorly presented work in pupils' books.

Many pupils demonstrate good behaviour around the school and are courteous to staff and visitors. A few pupils, however, do not behave appropriately at break, lunchtime and between lessons and do not always treat adults and other pupils with appropriate respect.

Most pupils feel safe in school and feel that the school deals appropriately with any issues that arise. In general, pupils have a sound understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices and there are high levels of participation in extra-curricular physical activities.

Pupils make an appropriate contribution to decision-making in the school. The active school council has played a role in, for example, extending healthy choices in the canteen and reviewing the school's behaviour policy. Many pupils participate in the wide range of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, which include clubs for chess, computer coding and cheerleading. Through these activities, pupils develop their social skills well by collaborating with pupils from other year groups. Sixth form pupils support younger pupils effectively, for example through a 'buddy reading' scheme.

In 2017, attendance declined substantially. Rates of attendance have not compared well to those in similar schools over the last three years. This has a negative impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate. In the majority of instances, teaching is successful in helping pupils to develop their skills and make sound progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. However, there is too much variation in the quality and impact of teaching.

In the majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations and promote pupil progress well through engaging and challenging tasks. They plan sequences of activities that link closely to and build well on pupils' prior learning. In these lessons, teachers use a variety of approaches and carefully prepared resources to engage pupils' interest successfully and meet the needs of individual pupils. In a few instances, teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding.

In a minority of cases, however, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan activities that are insufficiently challenging and do not enable pupils to make sufficient progress. In these lessons, teachers do not establish an appropriate pace of learning. As a result, pupils either spend too long on undemanding tasks or they do not have sufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning. In these lessons, teachers do not develop successfully pupils' independence and resilience in their learning, and they do not use questioning well enough to develop their thinking.

In many cases, teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and provide them with valuable feedback on their progress. They give pupils a variety of appropriately designed tasks to enable them to improve their work. Around half of pupils improve their work well in light of this guidance. In around half of cases, however, teachers

are not consistent enough in ensuring that pupils make appropriate improvements to their work. Furthermore, in a minority of instances, teachers' feedback is not clear or precise enough to help pupils improve.

The school's curriculum builds suitably on pupils' learning from previous key stages. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, the school considers pupils' aspirations carefully to inform curriculum planning, and it offers a suitable range of academic and vocational courses. Partnerships with a range of other providers are used well by the school to provide appropriate provision for the most vulnerable pupils.

The school plans appropriately for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. It has provided suitable training for staff to help them support pupils' skills development through their subject teaching. In many cases, departments provide an suitable range of activities that contribute appropriately to the development of pupils' literacy skills, including opportunities to write at length for a variety of purposes and audiences. The school has identified a range of generally suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in meaningful contexts. For example, in food technology, pupils collect data on the healthy diet preferences of their peers, present their data in a pie chart and then analyse the information. However, in a few instances, numeracy-focused tasks are not closely enough matched to pupils' ability.

The school has suitable arrangements for the monitoring of pupils' progress in their skills development. It identifies those pupils in need of support with their literacy or numeracy and plans appropriate interventions to improve their skills. Plans to develop pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum are at an early stage of development.

A valuable programme of enrichment opportunities is available to pupils. This includes a range of sporting events, trips to the Imperial War Museum and Auschwitz, and activities such as hill walking and kayaking where pupils build their leadership skills as part of a public services course.

The school offers appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture, such the annual Eisteddfod, a 'Welsh week' and a suitable range of topics related to Wales in subject areas. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills outside Welsh lessons.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Croesyceiliog School has a supportive and inclusive ethos. The school supports pupils appropriately to help them become active citizens who play a suitable role in making decisions about the life and work of the school.

The school council is an active body that contributes positively to many aspects of school life. Pupils play a suitable role in the development of school policies, such as that regarding mobile phones, and participate regularly in surveys about various aspects of school life.

The school encourages pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices. It promotes physical activity well, for example through its annual Activities Day, in which all pupils participate in a range of sporting and community events. There is a wide range of

opportunities for pupils to exercise outside of physical education lessons, including gymnastics, dodgeball and running clubs. The school has appropriate arrangements for the promotion of healthy eating and drinking.

The school provides a variety of valuable extra-curricular activities, such as the popular annual school production and chess and philosophy clubs. These activities contribute well to improving pupils' wellbeing and self-confidence.

The school monitors pupils' academic progress suitably. It plans appropriate interventions, such as mentoring sessions, nurture groups and 'booster' classes for those pupils identified as underachieving. Interim reports provide parents with appropriate information regarding their child's progress. However, annual written reports to parents do not contain sufficiently clear targets for improvement.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely. It promotes suitably the importance of attending school regularly, for example through reward schemes. However, these strategies have not had sufficient impact on improving rates of attendance.

The recently strengthened behaviour policy is beginning to have a positive impact on improving behaviour in lessons and reducing fixed-term exclusions. The school monitors pupil behaviour appropriately and works with external agencies to provide suitable support for individual pupils in most instances. In a few instances, however, staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

There is suitable provision to support pupils with additional learning needs. Teaching assistants support these pupils effectively in lessons and through small group sessions. The school, supported by a range of partners, provides helpful interventions for pupils with specific barriers to learning, such as the 'Talkabout' programme, which develops pupils' interpersonal skills. Individual Education Plans have clear and appropriate targets and provide staff with helpful advice regarding how they can best support these pupils in lessons. Parents and pupils are fully involved in reviewing progress towards targets. The school works well with its partner primary schools to help pupils settle quickly into Year 7.

The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. There is a suitable programme of personal and social education, and activities such as trips to the Louvre, first world war battlefields and the Globe Theatre develop pupils' understanding of culture and the wider world. The school provides suitable guidance for pupils in Year 9 and Year 11, making decisions about their option subjects and for pupils in the sixth form wishing to move on to higher education. However, opportunities for pupils to learn about careers and the world of work are limited.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher and his senior team have a clear vision for the school based on an ethos of helping pupils of all abilities to learn, respect others and be ambitious. This vision is communicated successfully to staff, pupils and parents. However, overall,

there is too much variation in the effectiveness of leadership, and leaders have not secured sufficient or sustained improvements in important areas of the school's work, such as attendance rates, pupil outcomes at key stage 4 or the quality of teaching.

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders focus appropriately on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, and are distributed equitably across the leadership team. However, the large span of responsibilities undertaken by senior leaders limits their capacity to fully address key issues.

The school has recently refined and strengthened many aspects of its line management arrangements. This is beginning to enable senior leaders to hold middle leaders to account for performance in their area of responsibility. Regular line management meetings have suitable, common, standing agenda items, but in a few instances these meetings focus too much on operational matters and do not generate appropriate action points. There are suitable arrangements for performance management. Objectives align suitably to the school's identified priorities and focus appropriately on improving standards and the quality of teaching. Senior leaders challenge underperformance robustly.

The school has provided middle leaders with appropriate training to develop their leadership skills, and valuable opportunities for a few of them to take responsibility for improving specific aspects of the school's work. These strategies have not had a consistent enough impact on reducing variation in the effectiveness of middle leadership.

Senior leaders are frank and honest in their appraisal of the school's work and have a sound understanding of most of school's strengths and weaknesses. They carry out a suitable range of self-evaluation activities, such as lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. They use this first-hand evidence to provide heads of department with useful, detailed information about standards and teaching in their subject areas. Middle leaders analyse performance data appropriately but, in many cases, they do not take sufficient responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of their department's work.

The school gathers pupils' views systematically and regularly. Senior leaders use this information appropriately, for instance when refining the school's behaviour policy. The use of parental feedback, however, is underdeveloped.

The school improvement plan identifies key priorities clearly. These priorities link closely to the main findings in the self-evaluation report. The plan contains suitable actions for securing improvement and broad timescales for implementation. However, in a few instances, success criteria in the plan are not measurable or precise enough. Departmental improvement plans are generally suitably aligned to whole-school priorities, but there is too much variation in the quality of departmental improvement planning. In many cases, plans do not make clear enough how and when progress is to be monitored or focus strongly enough on improving the quality of teaching.

The school provides suitable support for the professional learning of staff. This support includes individual training packages that are suitably linked to staff's performance management objectives, and a regular 'teaching and learning newsletter' to disseminate good practice. However, these strategies have not had a consistent enough impact on the overall quality of teaching.

The headteacher and governing body manage expenditure carefully and make best use of the resources available to the school. Staff are appropriately qualified and are deployed suitably. The school makes appropriate use of grant funding, such as the pupil development grant, to support the school's most vulnerable pupils but this has not had sufficient impact on the outcomes of this group of pupils.

The governors are closely involved in the life of the school and have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They offer suitable challenge and support to the school.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 26/03/2018