



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

A report on

Castle Park Primary School

**Church Road
Caldicot
NP26 4HN**

Date of inspection: December 2022

by

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

About Castle Park Primary School

Name of provider	Castle Park Primary School
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	194
Pupils of statutory school age	180
Number in nursery classes	*
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	26.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	17.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/03/2015
Start date of inspection	05/12/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Castle Park Primary school is a well-led, welcoming place to learn. The headteacher leads a team of teachers and teaching assistants committed to improving all aspects of school life. They work hard to maintain positive relationships between staff and pupils and extend these relationships to form trusting and supportive relationships between school and home.

Most pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and listened to and this is reflected in the views of parents who are full of praise for the dedicated staff. Throughout the school, most pupils behave well, engage positively with the wide range of learning experiences and make good progress in their learning. They enjoy exciting opportunities to learn about the world of work from a wide range of people from varied backgrounds who share their skills, talents and career journeys. As a result, pupils develop the confidence and skills to express themselves articulately, share their ideas and justify their decision-making.

Across the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to reading and writing and enjoy the many opportunities to be physically active. They use digital devices effectively to support their learning and to produce reports, presentations, graphs and designs. They develop good mathematical skills and knowledge but do not use these skills often enough in their work across the curriculum.

Teachers work with their pupils to plan learning experiences that engage them and capture their interests. Many of these experiences allow pupils to explore the issues which affect them and others such as equity and sustainability. From a young age, pupils are keen to do well and to take on new challenges. However, pupils do not generally have enough influence over their own learning and in a few lessons, a minority of pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

Teachers use a range of strategies, such as effective questioning and immediate feedback to enhance learning. Many teachers plan sequences of lessons that support pupils to build their skills progressively in many aspects of their learning. However, teachers' planning for progression across a few aspects of the school curriculum such as in Welsh and the expressive arts is under-developed.

Recommendations

- R1 Further develop assessment for learning to better support pupils to understand the purpose of their learning and the progress they make
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills across the school

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

When they join school in reception, around half of pupils have skills that are at about the level expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those from more disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in their learning from their individual starting points.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their oracy skills and speak confidently and clearly with a range of people. They engage well in discussion and debate, listen attentively to other pupils' contributions and think carefully before responding to questions. As they move through the school, pupils develop a wider spoken vocabulary which they use well in a wide range of contexts. Pupils in Year 6, for example, describe the effect of large crowds at football matches on the environment and debate the causes and consequences of stereotypical thinking and behaviour. During lessons pupils engage in simple Welsh dialogue and offer answers to basic questions. Younger pupils describe the weather and identify colours. However, most pupils' ability to hold a short conversation in Welsh is limited.

During their time in school, most pupils develop a love of reading. They enjoy a wide range of books for pleasure and interest. Pupils in reception make rapid progress in recognising a range of letter sounds and many combine letters to read simple and, on occasion, complex words. In Year 1, pupils recall a story they have shared. They accurately describe the characters and relate the characteristics to people they know. By the time they reach Year 4, most pupils read fluently and with expression. Over time, pupils develop the confidence to discuss the books they read, summarising the main points and making simple predictions about what might happen next. By Year 6, pupils identify the author's use of techniques such as alliteration and simile which enhance their reading experience. A minority of pupils read and pronounce Welsh words accurately. However, they do not have enough opportunities to read purposefully in Welsh and this means they are often unsure about the meaning of the texts they read.

Most pupils make good progress with their writing skills in English. Younger pupils demonstrate good pencil control and form most letters correctly. They spell simple words accurately and make plausible attempts at spelling unfamiliar words. As they move through the school, they develop their writing skills well across a range of contexts. Younger pupils write engaging descriptions of 'cops and robbers' during their topic on 'People who help us', and older pupils create imaginative reflections on life during the second world war. As they progress, most pupils build on their language skills to include more complex sentences and a growing range of adventurous vocabulary and punctuation in their written work. Most pupils apply their creative skills appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 5 demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of poetic imagery when writing poems about the school day. They write short biographies of famous footballers in Welsh, using dictionaries well to choose the vocabulary they need. Many pupils write neatly and legibly and present their work appropriately.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. Younger pupils develop a sound understanding of number through a range of practical activities. They identify common two-dimensional shapes in their environment and measure accurately to work out the length of a racetrack. Pupils in Year 3 work well to gather data about their friends' favourite heroes and display the results in a bar graph accurately. Across the school, most pupils develop their mathematical reasoning skills well in mathematics lessons. They apply their knowledge effectively in real life contexts, for example to calculate profit and loss when creating World Cup merchandise. However, due to a lack of opportunity, their ability to apply their numeracy skills across different curriculum areas is less well developed.

Nearly all pupils' digital skills are developing well, and they use these skills regularly and effectively to support and enhance their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils combine a range of media including digital images to create striking images for Remembrance Day. Most pupils develop strong coding and presentation skills and by Year 6 they confidently use a variety of technology, including coding to create complex animations.

Most pupils progress well in their physical development during their time in school. They develop stamina and refine skills such as balance and co-ordination when taking part in sport and gymnastics. Pupils develop their creative skills through problem-solving, enterprise and through the arts. In Year 3, pupils discuss a range of possible answers to a problem, explaining their rationale and building on each other's ideas successfully to work out the most plausible conclusion.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

During their time at school, pupils develop strong relationships with staff and with each other. As a result, they feel safe, cared for and listened to. They are proud of the rules they have created based on caring and kindness and form lasting, respectful friendships. Staff set clear boundaries that help to ensure that most pupils behave well during lessons and around the school and this supports them to make the most of their learning.

Throughout the school, most pupils enjoy learning and engage, listen and participate well in lessons. When working independently on chosen activities they settle straight to work and display perseverance. Younger pupils work happily in small groups and on independent tasks and choose useful resources to support their own learning such as letter cards and sound mats. Most older pupils build successfully on others' views, forming opinions and generating ideas when discussing their work with their peers. They are often self-motivated and, in a few instances, relish opportunities to lead their own learning. By the time they reach Year 6 they have clear aspirations for their future. In a very few classes, pupils find it difficult to settle to work and disrupt others' learning.

As they move through the year groups, pupils demonstrate growing resilience for example when problem-solving. In reception, pupils use a variety of interesting materials to build a ramp to move a ball across the sand play area. Year 6 pupils construct rollercoasters with complex twists and loops and apply their scientific knowledge to ensure a marble reaches the end of the run using only momentum.

In all classes, pupils contribute their ideas on what they want to learn and in a few classes, they make choices about how they learn. Most older pupils are beginning to reflect on their learning and use success criteria suitably to identify ways to improve their work. Many challenge themselves appropriately in their work, for example when writing a story about a refugee's dramatic journey or when refining line drawings of wildlife, they use a wide range of imaginative vocabulary and experiment with shading techniques. However, they do not always have a secure enough understanding of the purpose of their learning and are less sure about how to improve their work over time.

Pupils learn how to be ethical citizens, for example, through their work on climate change and its effect on the locality and globally. They develop a strong sense of equity through evolving an understanding of their rights and the rights of others and reflecting on the lives of those across the world who strive to keep their families together during troubled times. They develop a strong sense of equity through their understanding of rights, finding appropriate ways to relax and play, sharing their talents and reflecting on the lives of those across the world who strive to keep their families together during troubled times.

Nearly all pupils feel that their views about improving the school are valued. Older pupils develop leadership roles and contribute their ideas for school improvement. The School and Eco Councils work with staff to lead changes to the school environment by, for instance, creating a new library area and creative suite, and improving the school grounds to attract more wildlife. Pupils run clubs at lunchtime by request and clubs such as digital and dance contribute to pupils' positive experience.

Nearly all pupils enjoy opportunities to be active at playtime and during physical activities such as dance, hockey and rugby. Many make healthy choices and understand the importance of eating a balanced diet. They develop a sound understanding of how to stay safe online, keeping their personal details safe and talking to a trusted adult if issues arise. The school's focus on emotional well-being supports pupils to understand the importance of mental health.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff develop nurturing relationships with pupils. Most have high expectations of their behaviour and encourage them to have high expectations of themselves as learners.

Most teachers use a range of approaches to engage pupils in their learning. They use questioning purposefully, address misconceptions and adjust their teaching effectively to support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Most teachers create worthwhile opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and are beginning to support pupils to reflect successfully on their learning. In a very few lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations and planning for learning is less effective. In these lessons, a minority of pupils do not engage with their learning and as a result do not make sufficient progress.

Many teachers have a secure knowledge of the curriculum, plan with clear learning intentions and provide explanations which help pupils understand what to do. They provide feedback to pupils, which enables them to improve their work during lessons

and to challenge themselves appropriately. However, they do not plan opportunities to discuss progress with pupils in depth often enough and, as a result, pupils are not always clear about the purpose of their learning or how to improve learning over time.

Across the school, teaching assistants are highly effective in supporting pupils to make progress, and often accelerated progress, in their learning. They reflect the warm and supportive school ethos in their working relationships with pupils, providing strong support for vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs.

Leaders and teachers have a clear vision for the school's curriculum focussed on developing independence, creativity and aspiration. They work together closely to create rich and authentic learning experiences. The current focus on humanities, for example, includes opportunities for pupils to better understand their locality and the wider world. Younger pupils find out how young activists share their ideas globally to combat climate change and older pupils empathise with children across the world who are prevented from going to school. Teachers are developing a shared understanding of progression in response to curriculum reform. However, overall planning for progression across the curriculum is generally at an early stage of development.

Many teachers plan sequences of lessons that enable pupils to transfer aspects of their knowledge and skills to other areas of the curriculum. A focus on developing descriptive language throughout the school, for example, supports pupils to use increasingly complex and effective authorial techniques in their work across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 4 describe the effects of erupting volcanoes through history in news reports and pupils in Year 6 use sophisticated imagery in their poetry about the local area.

Most teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' critical thinking. As they move through the school, they refine their contributions to discussion, build on each other's views and ideas and explain their reasoning when coming to conclusions. They engage well with the plentiful opportunities to apply their digital skills to support and enhance their work. Pupils develop their knowledge of mathematical concepts systematically. However, teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply these skills purposefully across the curriculum often enough.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales. They meet with the town council to learn about local history and make use of the nearby castle to explore the distant past. They collaborate with Welsh artists, celebrate special days and learn about influential Welsh citizens. Most teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn Welsh. However, they do not practice the language regularly enough throughout the school day and as a result, pupils' ability to use even basic Welsh is very limited.

Teachers develop pupils' understanding of relationships and diversity well. Younger pupils learn about what makes a family and explore the similarities and differences between themselves and others. As they move through the school, they explore the issues that faced people in the past and the adversity facing people today. They begin to challenge stereotypes and develop an understanding of the lives of those displaced from their homes through conflict.

Pupils enjoy learning in the school's well-developed outdoor environment. In reception, they enjoy the freedom to explore a range of interesting objects as they construct devices to move items from one side of the area to another. Many pupils are involved in attracting new wildlife to the school grounds and monitor the changes. Generally, however, teachers do not make the most of opportunities to teach children about the outdoors often enough when planning learning.

The school's planning to develop pupils' awareness of the world of work is a strength. From a young age, pupils meet people from a wide variety of careers such as the armed forces and structural engineers. As they move through the school they think about their aspirations and match these to possible pathways. The school is especially committed to providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities to learn from people outside of the school. Younger pupils visit the local church to learn about the Christmas story and older pupils benefit from opportunities to practise resilience and teamwork during residential visits where they build shelters and light fires to toast marshmallows.

Care, support and guidance

Staff at Castle Park Primary School create a caring and supportive environment for pupils and their families. The school's positive approach to building relationships contributes to its safe, nurturing and inclusive learning environment. Staff know pupils well and pupils value the intuitive support they receive. For example, the approach to supporting pupils with their social and emotional needs enables them to regulate their emotions and to understand when they may need to seek additional help. This thoughtful support improves attendance and affects positive change for those at risk of exclusion.

The school has developed clear systems to identify the most effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) provides strong support for staff through comprehensive advice and guidance. Highly skilled teaching assistants engage pupils in their learning effectively, motivating them to develop their confidence and resilience. As a result, they often make better than expected progress. Teachers work well in partnership with external agencies to plan provision that reflects pupils' individual needs precisely.

Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants ensure a warm welcome and early support for the families of the youngest pupils and those whose children have not yet started school. As pupils move through the school, staff continue to involve parents through events, workshops, home-school learning and regular opportunities to discuss their children's learning and progress. As a result, parents feel well-equipped to support their children at home.

Leaders and teachers value the role of visitors in enhancing the curriculum and in raising pupils' aspirations. Throughout their time in school, pupils appreciate learning from those with lived experience, those in a variety of careers and those with particular talents. These rich and authentic learning experiences provide pupils with opportunities to expand their thinking, use their imagination and develop a range of skills for life and work. Older pupils in particular benefit from the school's planned careers programme.

The school makes beneficial use of local artists and sports teams to support pupils' physical, social and cultural development. Many pupils take part in sports activities and tournaments, lunchtime clubs such as dance and after school clubs such as cookery. During the school day they enjoy rugby sessions with coaches from the local professional team and opportunities to play musical instruments such as violins and drums.

Older pupils develop as leaders and make valuable contributions to the work of the school and to the local community. For example, the School Council work on behalf of pupils to initiate improvements to the learning environment and instigate popular, pupil-led lunchtime clubs. The Healthy School Team contact local businesses for support with funding free fruit for all and engage the whole school in fund raising events to benefit the community. Most pupils across the school contribute purposeful ideas when planning authentic contexts for learning. In a few classes, they are beginning to influence how as well as what they learn. However, pupils do not generally take responsibility for their own learning.

Pupils have regular opportunities for reflecting on the values and beliefs of others through lessons and as part of their collective worship. The school has valuable links with a local church and pupils take part in events and services throughout the year where they deepen their understanding of faith and how it relates to the values they learn about. These experiences support their understanding of equality and diversity in their community and across the world. They develop a good understanding of human rights and a strong sense of advocacy and justice, for example through their work on Rosa Parks and current global issues around the displacement of people because of conflict.

Processes to promote positive rates of pupils' attendance are effective. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. Since her appointment she has overcome many challenges and has worked tirelessly alongside senior leaders to create a strong team ethos amongst all staff. All leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the needs of individual pupils and the local community and strive with passion to meet these needs effectively. They prioritise the well-being of all pupils and, as a result, the school is a lively, thriving learning community.

Together with pupils, parents and governors, leaders have created a whole school vision and an inclusive culture giving pupils a strong sense of belonging and the confidence to engage positively with their learning experiences. Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves and their staff as well as for the progress and well-being of pupils. The curriculum vision is aspirational for pupils' futures and seeks to influence pupils' lives positively through exciting learning experiences. Overall, leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

The school's work in partnership with parents and support agencies is effective. Leaders and staff are highly visible, and parents value the clear communication between school and home. There is significant trust and a shared belief that the school always acts in pupils' best interests. Staff support parents sensitively, for

example directing them to specific support for managing emotions and worries. Parents appreciate opportunities to attend family learning events that focus on enabling them to best support their children's learning, for instance in reading and number. Specialist agencies attend the school regularly to provide parents with direct support and advice.

Across the school, staff carry out their roles effectively. They feel empowered, trusted and well supported. They respond well to the team culture, typified in their work to develop thoughtful lessons and topics, which ensure consistency in learning for most pupils. Staff collaborate well with colleagues beyond the school. They work purposefully with local schools to improve aspects of teaching, to refine the curriculum and to improve transition links with the local high school.

The distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities and the effective arrangements for performance management and professional development of staff contribute to continuous school improvement. Staff use research to improve their. and each other's, practice. For example, approaches to using digital learning from home placed the school and pupils in a beneficial position entering the pandemic. Teachers grow into leadership roles and support staff enhance their skills so that they can support pupils more effectively.

Leaders use a wide range of evidence to robustly evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and this information is used effectively to set improvement priorities. Clear and timely monitoring activities inform leaders of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. For example, following learning walks, leaders identified the need to improve pupils' application of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Leaders work well to address national and local priorities. They have embraced additional learning needs reform well and ensure that the school addresses the needs of all pupils. All staff have a good understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and the school is making good progress in realising the school's unique curriculum design. The school's approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage is highly effective. Staff work diligently to support the most vulnerable groups by providing specific intervention that impacts positively on their progress in learning. In addition, the school provides valuable support, including financial support, for parents when needed.

The governing body acts as a strong school advocate, holds the school to account appropriately and supports leaders as a critical friend. Governors understand the needs of the community and fulfil their duties well. Leaders and teachers keep them fully informed of progress against school improvement priorities and include them in professional development opportunities focussed on pupil progress. The governing body ensures that the school has suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

School leaders and governors manage finances well and make prudent decisions that benefit all pupils. The school uses its grant funding effectively to ensure targeted support for vulnerable pupils and to provide them with experiences that they might not otherwise have. These include working with local artists, providing music tuition and additional resources such as bicycles and scooters. These experiences raise

pupils' awareness of what the world has to offer and support them to develop new skills and interests.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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