



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

A report on

Crynallt Primary

**Afan Valley Road
Cimla
Neath
SA11 3AZ**

Date of inspection: September 2023

by

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

About Crynallt Primary

Name of provider	Crynallt Primary
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	389
Pupils of statutory school age	359
Number in nursery classes	43
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%)	34.7%
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%)	27.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	03/01/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2015
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023

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

Most pupils at Crynallt Primary enjoy attending school. They behave well. Many speak articulately about how proud they are of their school. Most pupils feel safe, secure and well cared for. Above all they trust that adults will always support them when needed. During their time in school most pupils make good progress in their learning from where they start. They develop positive attitudes to reading and speak with enthusiasm about working outdoors. They develop good mathematical skills, but do not use these skills often enough or as well as they could in their work across the curriculum. Pupils in the school's Specialist Learning Centre enjoy a bespoke curriculum and make suitable progress against their targets.

The well-being of all pupils is at the heart of the school's work and all staff strive to create an inclusive environment where everyone is valued. This togetherness is displayed through the positive relationships between staff, pupils and their families. In the mainstream school and the Specialist Learning Centre, staff provide high levels of care, support and guidance that support pupils to enjoy school and participate effectively in learning. Across the school, teachers are developing their approaches to better engage pupils in their learning. They are improving their skills together, for example, all staff have improved their understanding of the Welsh language and as a result, pupils' ability to speak Welsh is a strength across the school. In a few classes, pupils are beginning to develop useful skills that help them to reflect on their learning and to think about how they could improve their work. However, pupils do not generally have sufficient influence over their own learning or develop their independent learning skills well enough.

The acting headteacher shows considerate and effective leadership. Along with the support of other school leaders and governors she is strengthening the development of all staff to implement a curriculum that is real, engaging and reflects the needs of the community. School leaders address national and local priorities well, including curriculum and additional learning needs (ALN) reform. Overall, they keep the work of the school under review appropriately. Looking ahead, leaders recognise that, by refining their approaches to this work, they can focus more sharply on evaluating the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress and discover what important areas of the school's work needs to improve.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation processes and focus more specifically on the impact of teaching on learning
- R2 Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners
- R3 Create more opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Crynallt Primary School, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in their learning from their individual starting points. Pupils eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers and pupils in the school's Specialist Learning Centre make suitable progress against their targets.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in acquiring their language and communication skills. Most pupils in Nursery and Reception develop their listening and speaking skills well. They quickly develop confidence to participate in discussions with adults and are beginning to ask suitable questions independently.

By Year 2, most pupils speak clearly and many express their views with confidence. As they move through the school, older pupils offer opinions thoughtfully and respond appropriately to the ideas of others. For example, pupils respectfully share their contrasting views about what they consider to be the most important celebration to them.

Most younger pupils' reading skills are developing well. They show a good understanding of their letters and sounds and are building confidence when constructing simple words and phrases independently. By Year 2, many pupils begin to read with fluency. Many older pupils read with appropriate expression and fluency, varying their tone of voice and using punctuation correctly to show their understanding. Older pupils develop reading skills with increasing confidence. They talk in depth about suitably challenging texts they have read. Overall, they show good recall and understanding of what they read, such as when they explain in detail the plot and the role of different characters within their favourite stories.

Many Nursery pupils develop their early writing skills well. For example, they mark confidently and form recognisable letters. By Year 2, many pupils use varied vocabulary and language patterns to write short stories and letters. Many pupils in Year 4 produce highly detailed and informative fact files and leaflets about local places of interest. Older pupils show a good understanding of different types of writing and purposefully apply their skills across the curriculum, for example, when writing a balanced argument about the future use of technology in the rainforest.

Across the school, most pupils' Welsh speaking and listening skills are consistently good. Most younger pupils respond to simple, everyday Welsh instructions appropriately. Many Year 3 and 4 pupils hold simple conversations independently, using a variety of familiar patterns such as likes, dislikes and simple greetings. Most

older pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns in their speech, including the use of the past tense. Across the school, many pupils make good progress in their Welsh reading and writing skills. By Year 6, many pupils read clearly with correct pronunciation and can deduce meaning effectively from the text.

Through structured lessons, most pupils build their mathematical and numerical skills well and make strong progress. They use these skills confidently when completing their tasks. In Reception, many pupils measure the distance that they jump by using their feet and hands. By Year 3, most pupils consolidate their skills effectively. They develop a good understanding of even and odd numbers and solve simple fraction problems successfully. By the time pupils reach Year 6, most carry out a range of challenging calculations confidently and accurately. They have a good understanding of basic geometry and calculate areas of triangles and circles correctly. However, pupils do not always apply their numeracy skills often enough in their work across the curriculum.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and develop their digital skills well. Younger pupils use these skills in a range of learning experiences, including programming a toy to move around a path, and use software to make a pictogram showing how they travel to school. Most older pupils use their digital skills effectively to support their learning, for example they use spreadsheets confidently and use formulae to calculate the costings for their enterprise project. Most use tablet computers well to undertake research, share and then present their findings in creative ways. Many pupils in Year 6 are confident in using simple coding.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well through a variety of beneficial experiences and activities. For instance, the youngest pupils are adventurous when experimenting with a variety of natural materials, such as using a mixture of leaves and twigs to create pieces of art. Older pupils enjoy performing and taking part in various musical workshops and musical events. For example, pupils in Year 6 presented a live radio program. During their time in the school, many pupils perform for a variety of audiences, which builds their confidence and self-esteem effectively.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils feel safe in school and have confidence that adults will support them with any difficulties they encounter. Most pupils believe that adults listen to their views and treat them with respect. The strong relationship between pupils and adults firmly underpins pupils' positive attitudes towards their experience of school.

Pupils across the school have a clear understanding of adults' high expectations for their conduct. They know that rules and routines help the school to run smoothly and ensure their safety. As a result, most pupils follow instructions readily and behave well in lessons and around the school. Most pupils show a strong awareness of their own feelings and how these impact on their own and others' ability to learn. Most pupils manage their emotions with increasing maturity as they move through the school. Overall, pupils' ability to regulate their own feelings and to empathise with others makes a significant positive contribution to the calm and settled atmosphere in the school.

Most pupils show a good awareness of the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, younger pupils understand the need to balance their screen time with more active play. Many pupils enjoy taking part in school clubs that help them develop their sporting abilities and share their interests with friends. Most pupils have an appropriate understanding of the potential risks of being online and know what actions they can take to protect themselves, such as using strong passwords. Older pupils recognise the negative impact of cyber bullying and know how to block unwanted contact and report any concerns they have.

Pupils value the opportunity to participate in a range of leadership groups that develop different aspects of the school's work. Pupils from across the school are represented in these groups and show pride in their work. For example, members of the school's eco committee play a hands-on role in promoting energy saving and coordinating recycling. Pupils extend their wider democratic activity by engaging with the local community as part of their work in class. For example, following their first-hand survey of play resources in the local area, pupils contacted the local council to persuade them to make equipment in a nearby playground more inclusive for children.

Most pupils have a good understanding of their rights and those of others. They show respect for adults and their peers and have a keen sense of how to treat one another fairly. Older pupils demonstrate a strong ethical commitment to supporting the needs of others. For example, they choose to donate profits made from their enterprise activity to support the work of local charities including a nearby foodbank.

Most pupils engage well with their learning. They show interest in their work and generally sustain their concentration well during lessons. For example, pupils in Year 3 set themselves ambitious goals when generating their own numbers during a maths activity. They persevere on their task, working with focus and testing their thoughts by using practical resources. In a minority of instances where pupils' engagement waivers, they have less opportunity to exercise initiative in their learning or to act with independence. Most pupils across the school use a variety of simple techniques to reflect briefly on their progress, for instance using thumbs up or sticky notes to highlight what they have learned and what progress they have made. Older pupils respond purposefully to teachers' oral and written feedback to improve and develop their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff develop strong working relationships with pupils. They know their pupils' abilities and needs well. They support pupils in a positive manner and most use a range of approaches to develop pupils' behaviour successfully. As a result, nearly all pupils conduct themselves well both in the classroom and around the school.

A key focus for the school involves the good work undertaken by all staff to support all pupils' emotional well-being. For example, the introduction of a strategy to support pupils to be able to regulate their emotions has proved to be highly successful across the school. All staff and pupils embrace the strategy, which underpins the work of the school.

Many teachers use a range of approaches to engage pupils in their learning. They use questioning effectively and occasionally adapt their teaching skilfully to address misconceptions and support pupils' understanding. They create valuable opportunities for pupils to work together and are beginning to support pupils to reflect successfully on their learning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers involve the pupils in the learning and create a positive working environment with stimulating learning activities that are well planned.

Support staff are highly skilled and deployed effectively throughout the school to support all pupils, including those with additional needs and those in the Specialist Learning Centre. They plan worthwhile activities for specific groups of pupils. For example, more vulnerable pupils receive bespoke interventions to support their emotional well-being, literacy and numeracy skills. Progress of these groups is monitored termly by the senior leadership team and if needed, additional interventions are put in place to support improvement. Of note, is the way in which support staff work alongside teachers to build a positive culture of reading, this contributes to pupils' love of reading in school and at home.

Overall, staff have a good understanding of the principles of Curriculum for Wales. There is a shared vision and the school is working well to design a curriculum that meets the needs of the school and pupils. They are developing original learning experiences that provide effective opportunities for most pupils to become confident learners. The recent concept, 'Belonging', for example, enables pupils to share appropriate information about their lives with others and to learn more about people and places in their local area, in Wales and the world.

Pupils are beginning to influence what and how they learn, they contribute their ideas during specific times each term, although this is at an early stage of development most staff realise the benefits of developing curriculum experiences alongside the pupils. Planning for pupils to take more ownership of their learning can be seen in a few areas across the school, however, generally this is less well developed.

Provision to develop pupils' digital, mathematics and literacy skills across the school is effective. Teachers use assessments well to inform their planning so that pupils skills build progressively as they move through the school. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are less well developed. Provision to develop pupils' relationships skills is good across the school. For example, teachers ensure that pupils develop an understanding of the features of positive and negative relationships and that there are different types of families. Leaders monitor these areas effectively to ensure the provision is successful.

The school fosters a strong Welsh ethos where most staff have high aspirations for the development of pupils' Welsh communication skills. Welsh is modelled well by staff and pupils engage enthusiastically in opportunities to use the Welsh language in their learning throughout the day. For example, when asking questions and answering using extended sentences. Teachers provide interesting opportunities for pupils to learn about their local area and strengthen community links. For example, through their work on the locality, pupils worked with the council to design improvements to the local park. The school has strong links with the nearby Church and pupils make regular visits to the local Abbey. Teachers also provide valuable

opportunities for pupils to visit places further afield in Wales such as Cardiff Museum and Llangrannog.

The school ensures that pupils develop a love for outdoor learning. They plan regular, purposeful activities for all pupils outdoors. For example, regular access to well-planned forest school activities provides pupils with learning experiences that enhances their understanding of nature and supports pupil's well-being successfully.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and fully inclusive community that actively promotes the safety and well-being of all pupils. Staff form strong relationships with pupils and model attitudes and behaviours that help pupils to feel secure and valued. This consistent action impacts positively on pupils' behaviour, their views about school and their enjoyment of learning.

Staff provide comprehensive support to promote the emotional health and well-being of all pupils. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on how they feel from an early age. For instance, they run regular greetings and check-ins with pupils that help them to describe how they feel and to recognise that changes in mood and motivation are common to everyone. Staff build on this knowledge purposefully by teaching pupils a variety of useful skills and techniques to regulate their feelings. Over time, this support helps pupils to deal with challenges independently and strengthens their readiness to learn.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is robust and systematic. Leaders and teachers within the Specialist Learning Centre and mainstream classes work closely with parents, other settings and specialist agencies to identify and address pupils' needs quickly. They tailor support carefully and monitor the impact of additional provision closely. Leaders seek specialist advice and share expertise with staff to improve the quality of support when needed. They make effective use of strong links with other schools in the cluster to quality assure the school's arrangements and as a source of mutual professional support.

Leaders develop the skills of staff to build capacity successfully. They ensure that teaching assistants are suitably trained to deliver a variety of beneficial interventions effectively. These include valuable support that helps pupils to narrow specific gaps in their learning, such as in their reading. As a result, most pupils across the school, including those in the Specialist Learning Centre, make sound progress in developing their skills from their individual starting points.

Staff develop worthwhile partnerships with parents. For example, they host workshops and run coffee mornings that help parents to develop their skills and knowledge and to share their experience with others. Parents' participation in these events boosts their confidence and ability to support their child's/children's needs at home successfully.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of their local community and its heritage. For example, as part of a project on Belonging, older pupils investigate the history of their school and its locality. They make worthwhile use of visits to develop pupils' understanding of how the area has

changed over time and how it compares to other areas in Wales. This helps pupils to understand the unique character of their environment and how it shapes their personal experience and their Welsh identity.

Teachers support pupils to develop their understanding of the richness of the wider world, for instance through a whole-school study of celebrations. This enables pupils to appreciate a diversity of cultures and to develop respect and understanding for a variety of differing views and traditions. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of spiritual beliefs as part of their cross-curricular work and through visits, assemblies and acts of worship. These experiences support pupils to reflect on their own values and to behave respectfully towards others within school and in the wider community.

Staff enable pupils to play an active part in developing the school through the activity of the various pupil voice groups and through other leadership roles. For example, they support members of the Criw Cymraeg to promote pupils' use of spoken Welsh by providing items that pupils purchase with reward tokens in the Siop Siarad at lunchtimes. The school has recently developed a library area for older pupils to use. This is a popular resource for pupils who enjoy selecting books they wish to read and for the pupil librarians who are proud to take on responsibility for recording loans and looking after the library stock.

The school provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their expressive skills and to build their self-confidence. For example, many pupils learn how to play a musical instrument and enjoy sharing their skill in regular performances for parents and members of the local community. Staff provide a broad variety of extra-curricular activities at lunch times and after school that help pupils to develop their physical skills and to nurture their individual interests. Many pupils value the chance this affords to work as a team and to compete with others through matches and in individual competitions.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff show a firm commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils throughout their time in school. Leaders set high expectations for pupils' attendance and reinforce these frequently in letters to parents, through the school website and via social media. Overall attendance has risen since pupils returned after the pandemic though it remains below earlier levels. The school has effective systems in place to drive further improvement, including through its partnership with the education welfare service and other outside agencies.

Leadership and management

Since accepting the role, the acting headteacher has demonstrated considerate, sensitive and effective leadership. Alongside the acting deputy headteacher and senior leaders they have created an inclusive culture, where pupils' emotional well-being is at the heart of the school's work. As a result, most pupils feel safe and secure, and have a strong sense of belonging. Leaders work together efficiently and support each other positively.

All staff provide and maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They have a good understanding of the diverse needs of individual pupils and the local

community and want the best for the pupils in their care. Staff in the school's Specialist Learning Centre provide purposeful and responsive support to all pupils.

All staff work together successfully, relationships are strong and the high levels of collaboration are all key ingredients to the school's success in relation to school improvements. Together with staff, leaders create a strong community ethos that results in a high level of understanding and commitment from all stakeholders. For example, a collective approach to, and responsibility for, promoting the school's safeguarding culture enables pupils to feel safe and secure as they learn.

Arrangements to distribute roles and responsibilities and to develop leadership capacity are effective. Senior leaders work well as a team and draw on staff experiences and skills to improve provision, progress and outcomes for pupils. For example, staff who have benefitted from attending extended Welsh courses have returned to school, upskilled and enthused their colleagues and as a result, most pupils ability to speak Welsh is a strength of the school.

There are regular and effective professional learning opportunities for staff. For example, professional learning has impacted positively on all staff and strengthened the school's provision to develop pupils' reading skills. Focused sessions have allowed all staff to extend their knowledge and understanding of ALN reform, this has ensured highly effective processes to support the emotional well-being of all pupils.

Leaders use a range of evidence to evaluate the progress and standards of pupils' work. Self-evaluation processes are appropriate and suitably inform leaders of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, information from self-evaluation is used well to inform the school's development plan. However, self-evaluation processes are not always sharp enough, for instance, in identifying inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Work to address national priorities progresses well. Leaders have embraced ALN reform effectively and the quality of pupils' Welsh language skills across the school is a strength. In addition, the school is making sound progress in realising the new Curriculum for Wales. For instance, staff are starting to provide more authentic learning experiences for pupils and, as a result pupils are well motivated and more engaged in their learning.

Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the way the school operates, including how it recognises and addresses improvement priorities. This enables governors to act adeptly for the benefit of pupils. They take their statutory duties seriously, including ensuring that the school has appropriate arrangements for healthy and drinking.

School leaders and governors monitor spending diligently, including grant funding. They have a secure understanding of the school's finances and act sensibly to ensure that resources are allocated wisely and in response to school improvement priorities. The school's commitment to tackling poverty permeates its work. Leaders use the pupil development grant well to fund skilled staff to implement a worthwhile whole school approach to well-being, to support pupils' development of skills and to provide access to a wide range of enjoyable experiences.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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