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

A report on

Crumlin High Level Primary School

Commercial Road
Crumlin
NP11 4PX

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Crumlin High Level Primary School

Name of provider	Crumlin High Level Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	130
Pupils of statutory school age	94
Number in nursery classes	25
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 21.3%)	7.8%
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 22.2%)	14.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	24/11/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	28/04/2014
Start date of inspection	24/10/2022
The local authority appointed an executive headteacher in October 2022 to lead the school.	

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

The previous headteacher retired at the end of the last academic year. In October 2022 the governing body appointed a headteacher from another local school to lead the school. During periods of absence and prior to this appointment, the deputy headteacher worked well with permanent and temporary staff to develop a positive culture of teamwork at the school. This began to address important areas for improvement in the school's teaching and assessment practices and pupils' learning. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

The new leadership team is beginning to evaluate the school's provision and its impact on pupils' learning more stringently. They now have a clearer picture of the school's strengths and its weaker areas. They are beginning to make better connections between the new self-evaluation processes and the school's improvement plans. However, at this stage in the school's development, leaders have not shown that they can secure improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

Pupils interact very well with adults and each other. There is an inclusive atmosphere at the school and pupils and staff welcome each other warmly in the mornings and enjoy each other's company at breaktimes. Pupils are courteous and polite, and nearly all of them behave impeccably. They enjoy attending school and are eager to contribute to their own learning. This is due to the positive working relationships that they have with their teachers and the support staff.

The school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities, both indoors and in the outdoor areas. Within these learning areas, staff ensure that a positive ethos of care and support exists for pupils. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour and this contributes effectively to the pupils' enthusiastic approach to school life. This culture of inclusivity helps pupils to build confidence and develop their self-esteem, whilst also respecting the views and feelings of others.

Pupils' speaking in English, their listening, reading and physical skills make good progress as they move through the school, and they use these skills effectively across various areas of the curriculum. However, pupils do not develop their writing, numeracy, digital and Welsh oracy skills well enough.

The deputy headteacher shared responsibilities effectively among staff and provided beneficial opportunities for professional learning. This is developing and contributing to a progressive whole-school ethos, where staff and pupils feel valued for their contributions to the life of the school.

Recommendations

R1   Establish and maintain effective leadership and governance to support school improvements

R2   Improve the quality of teaching and assessment practices across the school

R3   Improve pupils' extended writing skills

R4   Improve pupils' numeracy skills

R5   Ensure that the provision for Welsh improves pupils' oracy skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school, around half the pupils' literacy, numeracy and social skills are either at or below those expected for their stage of development. During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make appropriate progress from their starting points.

Most pupils listen carefully, speak confidently, and express their ideas sensibly. Younger pupils talk about their work enthusiastically, for instance when they discuss a police investigation on how the Big Bad Wolf entered their classroom. Many older pupils communicate well in English. They offer answers and express opinions eloquently. For example, in Year 6, many pupils explain thoughtfully how Roman society shaped the organisation and rules of other countries and cultures.

The reading skills of many pupils are effective. By Year 2, they read accurately and decode unfamiliar words successfully. By Year 6, many pupils read complex texts with good understanding, both in class and independently, when researching topics, such as Victorian crimes and punishments. As a result, many pupils are confident readers, and they find information, from various texts and relevant websites, to enrich their work across the curriculum. For example, they research myths surrounding dragons and study how the power of the sun and a lack of rain creates famines.

Most younger pupils develop fine motor skills effectively. For example, they glue small shapes together to create mosaics of different animals. Many pupils progress appropriately from mark making in the youngest classes to forming letters, words and sentences during their time in Year 1. The majority of pupils also spell accurately and use suitable punctuation. By Year 2, many pupils make satisfactory progress and use varied vocabulary and language patterns to write basic stories, character profiles and fact files. For example, they write a report on the characteristics of beaches. However, many pupils do not write well independently and much of the writing lacks quality.

By the time pupils reach Year 6, the majority of pupils write suitably in a range of contexts. Many pupils are beginning to present their written work neatly. They structure their work well, under the direction of the teacher and support staff, and show an appropriate understanding of effective punctuation and extended vocabulary. For example, older pupils respond to questions sensibly that are based on visual literacy tasks and use verbs in the past tense purposefully. However, many pupils do not write at length independently to reflect their true abilities.

The progress that most pupils make in developing their Welsh oracy skills as they travel through the school is limited. A minority of pupils use suitable phrases regularly in everyday situations. Most answer with basic responses during discussions with teachers and each other. However, too few pupils build their knowledge of the Welsh language systematically.

By Year 2, many pupils develop satisfactory mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. They work with numbers comfortably, collect information and record

their results in simple tables and charts, such as the size of objects around the classroom. They collect leaves and acorns on the school site and work out differences and totals, and experiment with capacity when filling different sized containers with water to create potions. The majority of pupils use their mathematical skills well in everyday tasks, such as when they identify different shapes and use them to create a witch's face.

From Year 3 to Year 6, many pupils demonstrate appropriate mathematical skills. Older pupils use taught strategies well, such as when they create accurate line graphs to demonstrate population changes over a decade. They use data suitably and present it in various forms efficiently, such as comparing rugby players' scoring records in international games. However, across the school, most pupils do not apply and understand how to use their mathematical skills purposefully in everyday situations.

Many pupils have adequate digital skills and pupils' competence is variable across the school. Younger pupils use electronic tablets appropriately to access learning programmes that support their reading beneficially. By the end of their time at school, most pupils use coding programmes well to create interactive games, which are shared with parents, and they manipulate texts effectively in electronic story books. However, many pupils do not create databases and spreadsheets confidently and do not interrogate data with enough understanding.

Most pupils develop appropriate creative skills, under the direction of adults. For example, younger pupils make clay models of jungle animals and mix colours to create rainbows. Older pupils investigate global issues by constructing turtles out of plastic waste to highlight the dangers of pollution in the oceans. They also interpret the work of famous artists independently, such as Gwen John's methods, to create their own portraits of South Wales miners. In addition, most pupils develop their artistic skills successfully, for instance when drawing the Crumlin viaduct.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils arrive at school enthusiastic for the day ahead and eager to learn. They feel safe and secure at school and feel free from any issues of bullying. Most pupils engage in their learning activities and collaborate with peers effectively, such as when younger pupils work with partners to study the characteristics of different materials. Nearly all pupils are co-operative, helpful and think of others' feelings sensitively.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and when they move around the building. They understand and respond positively to the school's procedures to encourage good behaviour, and this is a strong feature at breaktimes. They have warm and respectful relationships with adults in the school, which creates a settled and happy learning environment. They trust their teachers and nearly all pupils feel that staff look after them well.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They learn about the advantages of healthy eating as part of the curriculum and use this knowledge to make informed choices about which foods will benefit their long-term health. The younger pupils develop effective social skills during outdoor activities and play

purposefully with their peers. Pupils develop their physical skills well on a daily basis and join staff willingly when they take part in the daily mile. During this time, they often embrace the opportunity to discuss their feelings and well-being with adults. As a result, most pupils show a good understanding of their own emotional well-being and establish supportive relationships with their peers. They also have a good understanding that exercise is good for the health of their hearts.

Many pupils including those eligible for free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs, play an active role in the life and work of the school. They embrace opportunities to take on leadership roles through joining a variety of pupil voice groups at the school. These include the School Council, Tîm Iaith, Heddlu Bach and the Eco Council. Most pupils speak positively about the impact of these groups and their support to the school community. For example, they talk proudly about a plastic pollution project, which a national magazine published as an example of positive environmental awareness. Most pupils show a clear understanding of their responsibilities within their community and as global citizens.

Nearly all pupils stay on task for the duration of set activities and avoid distractions well. They collaborate effectively and use worthwhile strategies sensibly to develop positive attitudes to learning. They use the roles of the 'Crumlin Crusaders' well to identify successful skills that support their learning. Most younger pupils listen attentively to their teachers and work purposefully together on teacher led tasks. Many older pupils show diligence and interest in their work. As a result, they display good levels of confidence during tasks. Additionally, many pupils participate beneficially in a range of extra-curricular activities, such as the cookery, football and gardening clubs.

Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the values that underpin the school rules and this helps to develop the school's nurturing and caring environment. For example, older pupils learn about the school behaviour policy when studying rules and laws in different eras of history. Most pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe online, such as not sharing passwords with others. They also act sensibly on advice from the community police officers that reinforces important messages around the topics of personal safety, drug misuse and cyber bullying.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers provide appropriate support to pupils through their planning and delivery of the school's curriculum. In partnership with support staff, they ensure that pupils have equal access to learning activities. They share clear learning objectives with pupils in lessons and generally make appropriate use of resources to support their teaching. For example, older pupils receive an effective digital demonstration of how to create an emotion graph before recording their feelings. However, overall, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This often limits the progress that pupils make in lessons and over time. In a majority of lessons, teachers direct the learning too much and they do not challenge pupils well enough to produce their best work.

Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils that enable them to feel relaxed and ready to learn in class. They manage pupils' behaviour very well. They are particularly sensitive to pupils who struggle emotionally and provide

beneficial and nurturing support, whilst not disturbing the learning of others. The school supports the development of the social and emotional skills of all pupils well. It helps pupils from all backgrounds to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make positive choices in their lives, for example about healthy lifestyles and online safety. As a result, the school helps pupils to understand the impact that healthy eating and sensible behaviours have on their mental and physical well-being.

Many teachers use questioning suitably to find out whether pupils understand how to use their knowledge and skills in everyday life. Teachers and support staff let pupils know regularly how they are progressing during lessons and this helps them to overcome difficulties. However, they rarely offer significant challenges to pupils beyond the tasks set at the start of the lesson. They do not adapt sessions skilfully enough to move pupils on to the next steps in their learning effectively.

Teachers use summative assessments accurately to evaluate how well pupils are progressing. For example, assessments of pupils' reading show that intervention strategies for less able pupils are very beneficial. Overall, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. Teachers' written feedback often celebrates pupils' achievements appropriately, but it does not direct them to move forward in their learning well enough. Additionally, in a minority of sessions teachers do not ensure that pupils' learning is secure before moving them onto more advanced tasks.

The school plans an interesting curriculum that meets the needs of pupils appropriately. They use the curriculum well to support the emotional needs of vulnerable pupils, such as on their return to school after the pandemic. They work hard to ensure that the curriculum captures the interests of pupils. For example, teachers encourage pupils to identify with their own cynefin, which includes researching the history of the high-level railway, from where the school derives its name. Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' critical thinking skills appropriately through inquiry-based tasks. Pupils engage with this approach well, enjoy the topics and are proud of their work.

The curriculum includes adequate opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy skills in their topic work. However, many tasks lack authenticity and are not accurate representations of real-life activities.

The school designs learning activities appropriately to reflect the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales and the wider world. The curriculum includes the histories and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities purposefully, for example, when pupils celebrate Black History month and the life of Betty Campbell. The school provides worthwhile learning experiences to raise pupils' aspirations around future careers. For example, staff invite local, professional sportspeople to school, to inspire pupils.

Teachers and support staff model English to pupils purposefully and a few use the Welsh language well. Teachers follow an appropriate action plan, in conjunction with other schools, to improve pupils' Welsh skills. However, the implementation of the plan is not effective, it is not consistent across the school and it has little impact on pupils' ability to speak Welsh.

Care, support and guidance

The school supports pupils' emotional and social needs effectively. This enables pupils to engage positively with the experiences and opportunities that school provides. A particular strength is the way the school meets the needs of each individual pupil during its well-considered support for pupils' physical and mental health. Staff oversee an effective well-being 'check-in' for all pupils in the morning, and this encourages individuals to focus on their feelings sensibly. It allows pupils to settle into school well and it is very beneficial for vulnerable pupils.

Staff contribute powerfully to the well-being of pupils. They understand, through bespoke professional learning, that trauma and adverse childhood experiences are detrimental to pupils' development. As a result of this and following the pandemic, staff allow pupils to use 'zen zones', where pupils can go and regulate their emotions if they become upset or anxious.

The school makes effective provision for pupils with ALN. The school collaborates beneficially with other local schools. Together they identify causes for concern and combine knowledge and experience to work out effective interventions for pupils. The school identifies the level and type of support required for individual pupils. The school tracks the progress of ALN pupils in relation to the targets in their individual plans and their progress from their individual starting points effectively.

The school uses support from outside agencies purposefully to provide effective support for learners with ALN. For example, ALN co-ordinators from local schools come together for virtual meetings with an educational psychologist to discuss how to address the needs of specific pupils.

The school extends aspects of its good practice for ALN pupils to all pupils by devising a purposeful one-page profile for every pupil in the school. Older pupils contribute to the writing of this profile as do the parents of younger pupils, which creates a greater understanding of pupils' individual needs.

The school's culture promotes pupils' moral development well. Staff act as good role models in this respect. The school also caters well for pupils' social development. Staff place a high priority on positive social interactions and the pupils respond well to the positivity of adults at the school. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils' cultural development. For example, pupils look at Christmas around the world in order to appreciate cultural differences. The school provides good experiences for the pupils to learn how to develop spiritually and this includes opportunities for reflection during the day. For example, pupils from Year 1 to Year 4 take part in yoga classes to enable them to control their bodies and regulate their emotions.

The school helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse world, and it promotes human rights well. For example, the core value of respect is given a high profile in school policies and practices. This is embodied in class rules effectively and it is reflected very well in the impeccable behaviour of the pupils. The school challenges stereotypes in pupils' attitudes, choices and expectations in a purposeful way. For example, the planning of the curriculum for the oldest pupils targets stereotyping as a topic effectively and it

considers how peoples' views on gender, race, economics and ethnicity influence society.

The school is proactive in supporting and good rates of attendance. Arrangements, such as a welcoming and flexible drop-off time to start the school day work well. This eases congestion around the school and makes the start of the day a positive experience for pupils, parents and colleagues. The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Over time, there has been instability in the leadership of the school, and this has had a negative impact on important aspects of the school's work, particularly teaching and learning.

The school's current leadership arrangements are very new. The previous headteacher retired at the end of the last academic year following periods of absence. The deputy head teacher led the school during these periods and at the beginning of this term. In October 2022 the governing body appointed a headteacher from another local school to lead the school.

The deputy headteacher has developed many of the school's evaluation processes sensibly to target improvements in leadership practices. This includes the monitoring of teaching and curricular provision. She focuses on promoting the well-being of pupils as the core of the school's vision and ensures that families and the community are integral features of school life. The governing body supports this philosophy and encourages the school to implement effective well-being practices to enhance pupils' learning. As a result, leaders ensure that a caring and collaborative ethos permeates throughout the school.

Leaders' monitoring processes aim to ensure that the performance of the school is evaluated effectively. These developing systems are beginning to identify areas to improve, such as pupils' independent writing skills. The new leadership team distributes responsibilities to staff appropriately. However, the induction of staff to the new processes and responsibilities is very recent and the impact and effectiveness of their roles are at an early stage of development.

To improve the school, leaders now identify correctly that stabilising the staffing structure and improving the quality of teaching are essential to moving the school forward. They are developing a common understanding of professional expectations among staff. However, this is new, and the new leadership team has not had time to embed these practices and support temporary staff at the school with enough rigour. Currently, leaders do not ensure that teachers support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders have introduced processes to evaluate a wide range of first-hand evidence. These include the scrutiny of pupils' books and monitoring of teaching and learning. These processes are supporting the new leadership team to develop a clearer picture of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Leaders are beginning to set purposeful targets to move the school forward. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these new processes on improving provision and outcomes for pupils.

Leaders are beginning to gather views of other stakeholders about the school to inform their practices. For example, they now consider the views of parents and carers carefully and act on any findings promptly, such as re-establishing and improving the provision of after school clubs.

Leaders ensure a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They share clear expectations with staff. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink wisely and advise parents and carers on the importance of healthy food in pupils' lunch boxes.

Leaders ensure that staff make the best use of the premises. This includes stimulating outdoor spaces for the youngest pupils to experiment and play enthusiastically. Leaders allocate resources in the classrooms effectively and use the pupil development grant wisely to provide intervention activities for targeted pupils.

Governors have an adequate understanding of the school and identify that the school needs to improve important areas of its practices. For example, the governors, through the support of the local authority, have implemented a new leadership structure recently to support the school's senior leaders. They are beginning to hold senior leaders to account and understand clearly that the school faces immediate issues in terms of staffing and finances. They encourage and value the school's focus on well-being and its role within the community. Designated governors have begun to undertake visits to measure the quality of provision and its impact on pupils' learning.

The access that staff have to good quality and relevant learning opportunities to support their professional development is improving. Professional learning now links closely to school improvement priorities. A positive feature of this new view of professional learning is that staff focus on developing their own skills to improve pupils' outcomes.

The school collaborates well with other schools within the local authority, for example to plan for the Curriculum for Wales. Such opportunities provide valuable opportunities for teachers to compare and share their effectiveness with other professionals. As a result, the new culture of continuous professional development is beginning to lead to better provision and learning experiences for pupils.

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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