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

A report on

Caersws C.P. School

Maesawelon
Caersws
Powys
SY17 5HG

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Caersws C.P. School

Name of provider	Caersws C.P. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	65
Pupils of statutory school age	46
Number in nursery classes	11
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%)	16.9%
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%)	26.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/04/2013
Start date of inspection	23/05/2022

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

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

Overview

Caersws Community Primary School is a friendly and caring environment where all pupils feel happy and safe. Staff know the pupils well and support their well-being needs effectively. Pupils know who to ask if they need help and there is a strong relationship of trust and respect between them and the staff. Nearly all pupils behave extremely well and have positive attitudes to learning.

Staff work very well together to ensure all pupils make good progress during their time at school. Teachers plan engaging and stimulating activities which inspire pupils to learn and develop their skills. They make effective use of the outdoor areas to enhance the provision for all learners and make good use of the locality to teach pupils about the environment, history and culture of the area in which they live. Following these experiences, teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across all areas of the curriculum. However, provision for the teaching of Welsh skills are under developed. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and physical skills which enrich their learning experiences and develop their confidence. However, teachers need to provide more purposeful opportunities for all pupils to lead their own learning.

Leaders have a clear vision of how they want to move the school forward. They have a robust system for evaluating the school's strengths and set ambitious targets for improvement. Leaders emphasise the importance of teamwork in order to raise pupils' standards and well-being. They make sure that they listen carefully and take on board the views of others. As a result, pupils, parents and school staff feel well supported, included in the decision-making process and that their contributions are valued.

Recommendations

R1 Address the health and safety issues identified during the inspection

R2 Provide more purposeful opportunities for all pupils to lead their own learning

R3 Provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh skills, especially in the older year groups

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils' skills in language and mathematical development are below the expected level for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with additional learning needs, make good progress from their starting points and achieve good standards in nearly all aspects of their learning.

Nearly all pupils listen attentively to adults and to each other and show respect when discussing their work or listening to one another's viewpoints. Nearly all pupils' speaking skills develop well and they express their opinions clearly from an early age. For example, pupils in the reception class explain clearly which natural materials they will use to make a jubilee crown, while pupils in Year 2 speak confidently about which ingredients are best used to make a mud pie. As they move through the school, pupils' communication and oracy skills continue to develop well. By Year 6, most pupils articulate their ideas and views on a variety of topics using a wide range of vocabulary, for example when discussing how to celebrate the Queen's jubilee.

The development of pupils' Welsh language skills has regressed due to the effects of the pandemic. Younger pupils respond appropriately to a range of instructions given in Welsh and are beginning to reply using simple Welsh phrases and terminology. A minority of older pupils can communicate basic information about themselves, sometimes using the past tense. However, the progress that most pupils make in developing their Welsh oracy skills is limited and too few pupils build on their knowledge of the Welsh language systematically.

Most pupils' reading skills develop well. Younger pupils have a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and make progress in their early reading skills appropriately. Older pupils read a wide range of texts fluently and accurately. They discuss the content of the books they read and give detailed information about the characters and plot. Most pupils can infer meaning from the texts they read and use a range of punctuation within texts to help guide their reading.

Nearly all pupils' writing skills are progressing well in line with their stage of development. The youngest pupils practice their mark making skills in a variety of ways and forms. By Year 2, many pupils can form letters correctly and can construct simple coherent sentences. More able pupils write more extended pieces of work, for example when describing their favourite book. By Year 3, pupils write confidently using full sentences which include a range of punctuation and descriptive words, for example when describing characters for their fictional stories. Most Year 6 pupils write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, for example when writing about the role of women and children in the south Wales coal mines. They organise their work appropriately into paragraphs and edit their writing, looking for ways to improve style and content.

Many pupils' mathematical skills are developing effectively. The youngest pupils know their number bonds to 5 and can count to 20. They use cubes and dice to add

and subtract single digit numbers and enjoy investigating in the outdoor areas, for example to find which objects are heavy and light. By Year 2, most pupils have a sound grasp of number facts and measurement, and handle money correctly, for example when role-playing in the outdoor shop. Older pupils use a wide range of methods confidently to solve problems. For example, they calculate the cost of ingredients needed to bake a cake and compare prices to find which is best value for money.

Most pupils make purposeful use of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their work across the curriculum. Younger pupils use a range of software confidently, for example when creating pictograms to record their favourite mini beasts on a bug hunt. Most older pupils use the internet effectively to search for information, and create multimedia presentations to present their findings. They develop a good understanding of how to use formulae within spreadsheets to calculate the cost of resources as part of their young entrepreneurs project.

Most pupils' creative skills develop well. Younger pupils can use a wide range of natural and man-made resources effectively to plan and create a range of interesting collages and artwork in the outdoor area. As pupils move through the school their creative skills develop appropriately. By Year 5, pupils can compose their own music using a variety of instruments, applying rhythm, beat and lyrics.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are courteous and are very respectful towards each other, adults and visitors to the school. They feel safe and well cared for in the inclusive and nurturing school environment. As a result, pupils are happy and proud of their school, and they feel confident that staff value their thoughts and opinions.

Most pupils take on roles and responsibilities and develop leadership skills appropriately. The limitations posed by the pandemic have hampered the school and eco councils' abilities to meet since the beginning of the year. Recently members of the eco council and school council have engaged enthusiastically in activities that are impacting positively on the life and environment of the school. For example, pupils in the eco council have worked hard to improve the school grounds by making wildlife habitats. This led to pupils using their creative skills to build hedgehog houses and bird boxes using a range of natural materials. As part of their work, the eco council has encouraged pupils in all classes to plant fruit and vegetables in the garden, which will be harvested in late summer.

Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of maintaining their emotional and physical health and appreciate the benefits of exercise and eating healthily. Pupils make good use of the school’s well-being resources and use them effectively. For example, older pupils use the worry boxes during the school day to record their concerns and they appreciate that staff respond quickly to their needs. Nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in physical education lessons and during extra-curricular sports activities. Older pupils enjoy participating in the ‘Mile a Day’ fitness challenge and many cycle or use their scooters to travel to and from school.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They work effectively with each other and concentrate well during extended tasks. As they progress through the

school, they listen carefully to views and ideas of others and contribute very well to class discussions on a range of topics. Throughout the school, nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The younger pupils are aware and understand the school rules and expectations and adhere to them well. Older pupils show a high level of maturity during lessons. They act sensibly when moving around the school and when participating in whole school assemblies. They interact well with each other during play and lunch times.

Most pupils respond appropriately to effective questioning and are using the verbal and written feedback from staff to improve their work. Their ability to provide and respond to feedback from their peers is at an early stage of development.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, we do not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. We do however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The headteacher has involved the whole school community in the development of the school vision for the new curriculum, which is based on 'Nurturing hearts, growing minds, opening eyes and imagining futures'. Staff work together effectively to provide a wide range of stimulating and creative learning experiences that meet the needs of all pupils.

Staff enrich the curriculum experiences effectively by inviting a wide range of visitors and organising purposeful educational visits which inspire pupils. They make excellent use of the local area to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils. For example, following a visit to Caersws workhouse, pupils produced empathetic diary entries from the perspective of an impoverished child in Victorian times. Another example was a visit from a nature charity, which in turn inspired pupils to arrange a visit to a wildlife habitat to educate their parents on the importance of conservation.

Teachers are developing a curriculum that builds on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the school. For example, they provide a structured approach to writing, which enables pupils to develop their skills successfully across a wide range of writing styles. There is generally a suitable balance between adult-led experiences and opportunities for pupils to work independently. However, there is a tendency for teachers to lead too much of the activities, which limits opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across all areas of the curriculum. For example, as part of their work on celebrating the Queen's jubilee, pupils wrote formal letters to the Queen, explaining how they are preparing to celebrate the occasion within the school.

Staff in the younger years are developing pupils' Welsh language speaking skills appropriately. However, staff do not provide a systematic approach to the

development of pupils' Welsh oracy skills as they move through the school and this limits pupils' progress in speaking Welsh.

Overall, the school has a well-organised approach to assessment and staff track pupils' progress well. All staff are aware of the individual strengths and areas for development for each pupil. This is a notable strength of the school. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress. Staff regularly use a range of effective questioning techniques. For example, lower down the school, teachers recap previous learning and use a range of rich questioning to further develop pupils' thinking skills. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for parents to understand their child's development and the next steps in their learning by providing informative reports.

In the younger year groups the principles of the foundation phase are embedded effectively. Nearly all activities in the outdoor areas skilfully develop pupils' creative, physical and imaginative skills. Teachers in the older year groups make effective use of the expansive school grounds to promote further opportunities for learning. For example, pupils estimate and measure the circumference of trees as part of their numeracy work.

Care, support and guidance

The school has a caring and inclusive family ethos where all staff help pupils to feel safe, secure and valued. Staff successfully promote the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect. The school also has a comprehensive range of strategies to promote pupils' attendance. The strong relationships with the parents and families help the school to support pupils' attendance well and this is supplemented by appropriate links with external agencies.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture where pupils learn how to stay safe in the real and virtual world. However, the current arrangements for allowing parents and carers to bring their cars onto the school yard to collect their children at the end of the school day are not appropriate. In addition, gates that allow access to the school grounds are not secured during the day.

Staff know their pupils well and support their personal and emotional needs effectively. They identify and address pupils' needs at an early stage. The additional learning needs (ALN) co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the wide range of additional needs of individual pupils across the school. Staff use a range of successful intervention programmes to help pupils improve their social, emotional, literacy and numeracy skills. The ALN co-ordinator, headteacher, class teachers and support staff meet regularly to monitor the progress of individuals and groups. They meet with parents and involve pupils effectively during annual reviews and when developing the one-page profiles for individuals. They work very effectively with outside agencies to provide additional support for pupils where necessary. For example, staff communicate with the physiotherapy team in a timely manner when they identify pupils with specific needs. They work productively with the team and parents to provide the necessary package for those pupils, so that they receive appropriate support in school and at home. The school's comprehensive ALN provision helps targeted pupils make sound progress.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral awareness through assemblies and collective worship sessions. Teachers plan rich opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and different cultures, such as through studying the life of Betty Campbell and Rosa Parks. The school promotes the importance of healthy eating and drinking effectively, and pupils understand what they need to do to keep healthy and active. This is supported by the work of the sport development officer and regular physical activities such as weekly swimming lessons.

Staff promote the culture and heritage of Wales effectively and relate many topics to the local community and the wider world. For example, older pupils study the habitat of the River Severn and the erosion caused by the river. Through this work they develop an awareness of climate change and its effect on their locality. Most pupils become members of the Urdd and participate in various activities such as the eisteddfod's art competition.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to represent their fellow pupils in leadership groups, such as the school council, eco council and Criw Cymraeg. These groups are now meeting regularly following COVID restrictions and have begun to contribute appropriately to school life with activities such as fundraising for charities.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school based on supporting pupils' well-being and ensuring that they all experience a rich curriculum full of opportunities that show each pupil they can be whatever they want to be. She leads by example and has high expectations of all staff and pupils. She is supported well by hard working and conscientious colleagues who know their roles and responsibilities well and form an effective team.

Self-evaluation procedures are based on a range of appropriate sources of evidence. The arrangements for collecting evidence are returning to normal following the pandemic and focus appropriately on pupils' progress and well-being. Leaders use their findings along with important national priorities to plan the school's development effectively. They set out their detailed actions sensibly, identifying realistic milestones that will help staff to know if they are on track. They consider the views of the school council and how the wider community can enrich each priority area. The actions are monitored termly, and the results discussed with staff and governors.

The governing body is very knowledgeable about the school's work and supports it well. They have a firm grasp of the school's finances. They receive useful information from the headteacher, staff and pupils about the work of the school. Prior to the pandemic the governors were actively involved in regular and purposeful visits to the school, which included learning walks, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff. During the pandemic they received regular updates from the school which included a weekly communication from the headteacher. They have recently begun to visit the school site once again. As a result, governors know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. For example, they are aware of the need to improve standards in Welsh and how the school plans to address this aspect of their work.

Leaders take good account of national priorities, including developing pupils' basic skills and improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils. They are preparing well for the new curriculum for Wales by considering the four purposes effectively while planning relevant and often exciting activities based on the areas of learning.

Arrangements for the management of staff performance are effective. Staff objectives link directly to priorities in the school's development plan and to their professional learning needs. Leaders arrange suitable training opportunities to develop staff expertise and knowledge. These have a positive effect on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

The headteacher controls the budget well. She makes effective use of the pupil development grant to support vulnerable pupils. For example, the grant has funded a practitioner to be trained to support pupils' emotional well-being. The school is well resourced and the buildings and vast outside areas are used effectively. The school works closely with the 'friends of the school', which provides significant additional funding to enhance the provision still further. For example, a significant donation was used to build an outside classroom that is used effectively along with the grounds to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

The school has a strong relationship with parents. They appreciate the efforts of the staff to care for and provide purposeful learning experiences for their children during periods of lockdown. Since pupils returned to school, the staff have included the parents in school life as much as possible despite social distancing restrictions, such as the art gallery displayed on the school yard for parents to enjoy safely.

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

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