



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

**A report on**

**Caldicot School**

**Mill Lane  
Caldicot  
Monmouthshire  
NP26 5XA**

**Date of inspection: October 2024**

**by**

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

## About Caldicot School

Name of provider	Caldicot School
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1326
Pupils of statutory school age	1146
Number in sixth form	181
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 Secondary is 21.1%)	15.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 11.2%)	20.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/06/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/10/2018
Start date of inspection	21/10/2024

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](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Summary

Leaders at Caldicot school have recently secured improvements in a few important areas of the school's work. Most notably, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved considerably. In addition, there has been an increased focus on supporting staff well-being, resulting in better staff morale and teamwork. Over time, however, leaders' work has not had enough impact on improving important aspects including attendance, the provision for skills and the additional learning needs (ALN) provision. In particular, they have not been strategic enough and they do not always evaluate the impact of their work sufficiently robustly.

Most pupils behave well and many engage purposefully in their learning. A majority of teachers plan useful activities and provide an appropriate level of challenge in lessons. In these cases, pupils make at least adequate progress in their learning. However, a minority of pupils do not make enough progress. This is usually because of shortcomings in teaching, particularly around supporting pupils with weaker skills in lessons.

There is a wide range of subject options at Key stages 4 and the sixth form and leaders are developing their approach to Curriculum for Wales for younger pupils sensibly. The extra-curricular provision is extensive and popular with pupils. Overall, the provision to support the progressive development of pupils' skills is at an early stage of development and there is insufficient support for pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills.

The pastoral team work collaboratively to support pupils' well-being, providing beneficial support. Although leaders have strengthened their processes to improve attendance, they do not evaluate the impact of their work well enough, and attendance remains a cause for concern. Even though safeguarding processes are appropriate overall, the inspection team has drawn the school's attention to a few safeguarding matters.

The school provides suitable general support for pupils with ALN through, for example, the support hubs and ALN transition programme for Year 6 pupils. However, leaders do not ensure that the school is meeting all its statutory obligations in this area and improvement planning for ALN provision is not sufficiently effective.

The school has a Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for pupils with complex needs. The SRB provides valuable support for the development of these pupils' social and emotional skills. They also benefit from experiences such as working in a local café. However, the curriculum in the SRB is not planned or implemented in a sufficiently strategic way. As a result, all pupils in the SRB are not making the progress of which they are capable.

## Recommendations

We have made five recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Address the safeguarding issues raised during the inspection
- R2 Strengthen strategic leadership, particularly the impact of evaluation and improvement processes
- R3 Improve the strategic leadership of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs
- R4 Improve attendance
- R5 Improve the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills and address the shortcomings identified in teaching, particularly with regard to supporting pupils with weaker skills

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. 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 about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main findings

### Teaching and learning

Most pupils arrive promptly to lessons and settle well. They follow instructions swiftly and are well equipped for learning. Most are well behaved and respectful of others, and many are friendly and interact well with visitors. These pupils work well with their peers in pairs or groups. Many engage well in their learning and focus readily on their work. A minority are particularly enthusiastic learners. Many pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, although a few often do not complete tasks in full and the presentation of their work is poor. A few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and maintain focus on their work.

A majority of pupils make at least adequate progress and recall prior learning suitably. A few make strong progress and have assured recall of prior learning. However, a minority of pupils make limited progress. This is usually due to the quality of teaching. These pupils have difficulty recalling prior learning and applying it to new contexts. A few struggle to access the work in lessons and therefore do not make sufficient progress.

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and provide good language models for pupils. They nurture positive working relationships with them and have high

expectations of their behaviour and engagement. Many teachers explain the learning intentions clearly and provide useful resources.

A majority of teachers plan activities which build learning sequentially and provide an appropriate level of challenge. They also use modelling effectively to support pupils' knowledge, understanding, and subject skills. These teachers take considered actions to reinforce pupils' knowledge of subject specific vocabulary. However, a majority of teachers do not provide sufficient support for pupils with weaker skills.

In a minority of cases, teaching does not enable pupils to develop and progress in their learning and skills well enough. For example, teachers provide repetitive or over-scaffolded tasks or talk too much. In these cases, the work provides insufficient challenge and does not develop pupils' deeper understanding. This limits their independence in learning and encourages passivity.

In most cases, teachers ask questions to check pupils' understanding of tasks and recall of prior learning suitably and a majority ask useful follow-up questions. Most teachers circulate their classrooms to provide helpful support. In addition, a majority of teachers provide pupils with useful verbal feedback. In a very few cases, teachers ask questions that probe and support pupils' deeper understanding well.

In around half of relevant subjects, helpful written feedback supports pupils to move forward in their learning. Where written feedback is less effective, the quality of the advice on how to improve varies and pupils do not respond to the advice given.

## **Skills**

Leaders have recently completed a useful audit which has given them a clear understanding of skills provision. In general, there are some suitable opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. However, the strategic planning and coordination of this provision is at an early stage of development, and there is insufficient support for pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills.

Most pupils listen respectfully to their teachers and peers. When asked, most pupils answer questions suitably. A few offer well-reasoned and detailed answers but a minority need to be prompted to extend their answers or make verbal contributions. In only a few lessons, pupils develop their speaking skills well because teachers provide more frequent opportunities for them to do so and expectations of their verbal contributions are high.

When reading, many pupils locate information efficiently and complete basic comprehension exercises competently. They interpret basic images and reading texts appropriately and are able to draw conclusions suitably. A few pupils have difficulty locating information and struggle to infer basic meaning.

A majority of pupils apply techniques to analyse texts suitably, though a minority spot techniques without then analysing or exploring their effect. A few pupils evaluate and analyse sources and texts particularly effectively, making mature and well considered comments on their usefulness or effect. For example, they evaluate which source is most useful to a historian studying Saladin and the Crusades.

Most pupils use paragraphs appropriately to organise their written work. Many have a suitable basic vocabulary and a majority have an appropriate broader vocabulary, including subject specific terminology. A minority of pupils have a generally limited vocabulary and struggle to use subject specific vocabulary accurately.

A majority of pupils use strategies appropriately to help them to structure and plan their written work, such as when they use temporal markers to structure their persuasive speeches in English. Their work is generally accurate. A minority of pupils make frequent spelling, punctuation and grammar errors, such as misusing capital letters. In a very few cases, pupils' handwriting skills are poorly developed.

In English lessons, many pupils write extended pieces suitable to their ability in a range of forms, and a majority do so across the curriculum. A few pupils struggle to write at length, particularly those pupils with weaker skills.

Many pupils have sound basic number skills. They work with the four operations competently when performing simple calculations such as when calculating the perimeter of basic shapes. A minority, however, have difficulty performing calculations.

A majority of pupils work suitably when calculating basic percentages in mathematics and science and around half of pupils work adequately with more complex aspects. For example, when they substitute negative numbers into formulae and when calculating with exchange rates. However, too often pupils do not develop their understanding of mathematical and numeracy concepts well enough, which hinders their ability to apply these skills in different contexts.

A majority of pupils draw a suitable range of graphs and, when given the opportunity, analyse these appropriately. Where there are opportunities, around half can identify trends in data. However, a minority make errors in graphs and are often only required to draw graphs that are far too simple or unnecessary. Overall, across the curriculum there are limited opportunities to develop numeracy skills beyond simple graph work.

Most pupils effectively use online learning platforms for individual and collaborative learning. For example, they use coding skills to program small robots. They are also aware of the actions to take to stay safe online, including password safety and protecting personal information. However, most pupils do not develop their digital skills well enough outside their ICT lessons.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of extra-curricular activities and valuable opportunities to develop their creative, physical and leadership skills. There are many sporting clubs and pupils enjoy participating in the annual drama production. There are worthwhile educational visits which enhance the learning experiences for pupils, including trips abroad and visits to Llangrannog. Pupils also develop these skills appropriately through lessons. For example, in drama pupils use their knowledge and understanding to prepare a news report in the style of Brecht. In physical education lessons, pupils use suitable technical skills and foot-eye coordination in football to keep possession of the ball in small-sided and modified games.

## **Cymraeg**

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning the Welsh language and many enjoy participating in these lessons. In Welsh lessons, a majority are able to provide basic answers to class questions and use simple sentences and key subject specific phrases in Welsh appropriately. Many have a suitable vocabulary and a majority have a sound knowledge of basic nouns and adjectives. In general, pupils write short pieces competently and fairly accurately. However, in speaking and writing tasks, pupils are generally over-reliant on resources given to them by their teachers. As a result, they lack confidence to communicate effectively or respond spontaneously in the language.

There are a few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons. For example, pupils attend Welsh language theatre productions and the Criw Cymraeg promote the weekly 'Welsh Wednesday' form time activities. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about and celebrate Welsh culture and heritage, such as in art lessons where pupils explore the work of Welsh artists. In addition, there is an annual Eisteddfod for younger pupils and the opportunity to visit Gwyl Fach Y Fro, a Welsh language festival.

## **Curriculum**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of most pupils. There is a wide range of subject choices in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Leaders collaborate effectively with other schools in the local authority to enhance the curriculum, for example through the introduction of e-sgol courses in Year 12. Leaders adapt the curriculum appropriately for vulnerable pupils who access worthwhile alternative pathways.

Leaders are starting to work with partner primary schools to develop a shared vision for their Curriculum for Wales. They are evaluating and adapting their approaches sensibly. In general, middle leaders work well when collaborating within their areas of learning and are starting to explore useful links between subjects.

The Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme includes suitable age-appropriate topics and themes which help pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Leaders have produced useful resources and work purposefully with external partners such as St. John Ambulance and the local health board. They have recently adapted form time to help staff foster positive working relationships with pupils. These sessions are beginning to provide valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their personal, emotional and social development.

There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of diversity. For example, in religious studies pupils develop a wider understanding of diversity and the effects of prejudice and discrimination and they benefit from learning about the lived experience of black, Asian and minority ethnic members of the school community during assemblies.

## **Specialist Resource Base (SRB)**

Pupils in the SRB make positive progress in terms of their social and emotional skills. They also have valuable opportunities to develop their work skills by serving in a local café and working in the country park. They are beginning to develop their Welsh language vocabulary and have sound opportunities to develop their digital skills. Pupils' academic progress from their starting points is more variable. Older pupils make generally sound progress, particularly when benefiting from access to mainstream lessons. However, the lack of planning for the systematic development of key aspects of literacy and numeracy skills inhibits pupils' progress and their ability to transfer skills across the curriculum.

Leaders in the SRB are refining their curriculum having listened to the views of pupils. For example, they are developing a new outdoor learning area to help widen pupils' experiences. However, the curriculum in the SRB lacks depth and sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills appropriately.

## **Sixth form pupils**

Sixth form pupils are proud ambassadors for the school. They engage positively in their learning and school life, displaying mature attitudes. Many are articulate and are able to explain their learning and viewpoints well. They respond thoughtfully to feedback from their teachers. Many work well independently and sustain concentration effectively, although a very few rely too heavily on teacher support.

## **Well-being, care, support and guidance**

Caldicot School is committed to supporting pupils to develop as ambitious, dedicated, determined, active and responsible learners. Following the recent appointment of the acting headteacher, the school has strengthened and clarified its expectations around behaviour to ensure all pupils aspire to high standards and are ready to learn. These approaches are having a positive impact on most pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around the school.

The school has a committed team of staff that work collaboratively to promote pupils' well-being. They provide beneficial support to respond to pupils' individual needs, including input from the counselling service and outside agencies. The school's work to support young carers is a notable example of this. Pupils in the SRB receive valuable support to improve their social and emotional skills and help them self-regulate. In addition, appropriate provision is in place to support pupils who are at greater risk of permanent exclusion through the work of the Alternative Provision team.

Leaders work purposefully, in partnership with Careers Wales, to provide pupils with helpful guidance as they prepare for their next steps in education or employment. For example, there is an annual careers fair where pupils engage with local colleges, universities and a wide range of businesses. Pupils also benefit from one-to-one interviews with a careers advisor and valuable work experience for all pupils in Year 10.



Leaders have recently strengthened the way they track and analyse data around bullying and are beginning to identify issues to address in assemblies and PSE sessions. Pupils feel that the school deals appropriately with bullying and most know who to turn to if they have a problem.

The school has recently strengthened its processes and structures to promote good attendance. Additional staff have been appointed to work with pupils and families. This is beginning to help the school identify the causes of poor attendance and offer more timely support for pupils to help them return to school and lessons. Leaders have established clear thresholds to ensure a graduated response to varying levels of non-attendance. Attendance in this academic year has improved as compared to the same period last year. While school leaders have started to collect and track attendance data to analyse patterns and trends, they do not analyse this information in enough depth to identify which strategies are working and what should be adapted or changed. Overall, rates of attendance in 2023-2024 did not improve well enough and were substantially below those of similar schools and pre-pandemic levels.

Many pupils, including most pupils in the SRB, feel safe in school and feel that staff encourage values of respect and responsibility. Leaders provide appropriate training for staff and governors, which helps them understand suitably their role and duties around safeguarding. The designated safeguarding governor has worked proactively to evaluate and plan how governors can support and challenge the school. During the inspection, the team has drawn the school's attention to a few safeguarding matters.

The school provides suitable general support for pupils with ALN. It operates two bespoke facilities to help pupils access learning. The 'Nurture Hub' offers a safe space for pupils with ALN who may be struggling with social and emotional behaviours and the 'Work Hub' supports pupils with their individual learning needs. The school delivers a helpful enhanced programme for Year 6 pupils to support their transition from primary school. ALN staff engage well with outside agencies to ensure pupils' specific needs are catered for.

Pupils with ALN, including those in the SRB, have useful one-page profiles. Individual development plans (IDPs) provide appropriate strategies to support pupils' learning. However, leaders do not ensure that the school is meeting all its statutory obligations in relation to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. For example, statutory processes to review and update pupils' individual plans are not always adhered to in a timely fashion. Leaders track pupils' individual progress using a range of data. However, they do not use this information well enough to effectively evaluate ALN provision. As a result, the school does not adequately identify specific improvements to enhance provision or identify professional learning needs for staff.

Pupils have numerous opportunities to express their views and influence the work of the school. For example, representatives from each form are elected by their peers to join the school council. The school involves pupils in discussions about learning and teaching, and they play a role in the appointment of teachers. Pupils in the sixth form benefit from worthwhile opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, all pupils in Year 12 take on roles such as supporting in form time and acting as 'buddies' for younger pupils.

## Leading and improving

In the very short time since his appointment, the acting headteacher has quickly established and shared a clear vision for school improvement. This is focused on ensuring all staff understand the positive environment required to enable pupils at Caldicot School to develop as rounded individuals who will become active and responsible members of the community.

The acting headteacher has quickly changed the culture of the school to create a positive and caring environment where staff and pupils are valued members of the school community. The strong focus on improving staff well-being has meant that staff feel well supported and empowered to carry out their roles. In addition, many parents feel that recently communication has improved well. These parents, pupils and staff at the school support the acting headteacher's drive for success.

The senior leadership team support the acting headteacher's vision and are working pro-actively with him to achieve these important aims. Since his appointment, the acting headteacher has worked diligently to help senior leaders to improve their leadership skills. This is beginning to help them to become more reflective leaders. However, a few leadership roles are not sufficiently balanced or equitable.

Recently, leaders have secured improvements in important aspects of the school's work, including pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Despite recent improvements, over time, leaders have not been strategic enough. They have not had a sufficient impact on securing improvements in important aspects of the school's work, for example pupils' attendance and a number of the recommendations from the last core inspection.

Leaders have recently refined processes for evaluation and improvement and a majority now have a suitable understanding of the broad strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility. A minority of leaders use a range of evidence gathered through self-evaluation to help plan for and secure improvement in specific aspects of their work. These processes are in the early stages of development. Leaders, including those in the SRB, do not always evaluate their provision robustly enough. In particular, they do not focus sharply enough on the impact that provision has on improving pupils' progress and well-being. This limits their ability to precisely plan for improvement.

Middle leaders are committed and enthusiastic about their roles. They are beginning to be more involved in whole school evaluation and improvement processes and value the support they receive from their line managers. However, there is too much variation in how effectively middle leaders carry out their roles and in how well they are held account.

The acting headteacher has established a clear focus on addressing national priorities. This includes supporting departments to consider their approaches to Curriculum for Wales. However, over time there has been a limited impact on improving pupils' skills and improving the provision for pupils with ALN. In addition, work to minimise the impact of poverty on educational attainment is in the early stages of development.

The school provides a broad range of professional learning opportunities for staff which has helped them to improve aspects of their work, such as 'live' instant feedback. In addition, the school has tailored professional learning through a range of programmes, including for aspiring leaders. These opportunities are valued by staff. However, this work is in the early stages of development.

Governors are committed supporters of the school. Until recently, their role in holding the school to account has not been effective enough. Since the appointment of the new Chair of Governors, governors have provided suitable levels of support and challenge to school leaders and have strengthened their understanding of the school's work.

In order to begin to address the deficit budget, leaders and the governing body have developed a clear recovery plan that has been agreed with the local authority. This work has helped them to identify and secure important savings in their budget. Despite this helpful work, the school remains in a deficit position.

### **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site security give cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately on the whole and have made in-year savings. However, the school remains in a deficit budget position and has a recovery plan agreed by the local authority. The use of the pupil development grant has not been planned or evaluated well enough.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://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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