

A report on
Croesyceiliog School

**Woodland Road
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2YB**

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Croesyceiliog School

Name of provider	Croesyceiliog School
Local authority	Torfaen County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1185
Pupils of statutory school age	1185
Number in sixth form	
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%)	18.0%
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%)	12.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.4%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.3%
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/01/2018

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Start date of inspection	29/09/2025
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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.

Summary

Croesyceiliog School is a welcoming and supportive community to which pupils and staff are proud to belong. Positive relationships are a notable strength of the school and leaders prioritise staff and pupil well-being successfully. The range of carefully planned support to meet the social and emotional needs of all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), is a particular strength.

In many instances, carefully planned teaching helps pupils make at least sound progress. In these lessons, pupils behave well, engage with their learning and sustain their concentration. In a few particularly effective lessons, pupils make strong progress. In the few lessons where teachers do not provide enough challenge or plan effectively to meet pupils' needs, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

Leaders have made sound progress in ensuring there are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum, in particular reading. However, the opportunities for them to develop their numeracy and digital skills are at an earlier stage of development. Overall, pupils develop their language skills in Welsh lessons suitably, although they have too few opportunities to practise these across the school. In addition, opportunities to learn about Welsh heritage and culture are at an early stage of development.

The school has developed successfully a clear and shared vision for its curriculum, designed in consultation with pupils, parents, and partners. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, trips, and creative opportunities that support pupils' personal, social and cultural development well.

Leaders have made beneficial improvements in important areas of the school's work, including provision for literacy and rates of attendance. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved year on year and compares favourably to levels in similar schools. Leaders have developed a strong culture of teamwork and collaboration. Strengthened self-evaluation processes help leaders to understand the school's most important strengths and areas for development, though their evaluation does not always focus sharply enough on the impact of provision on pupil progress. Governors are proactive, reflective and well informed about the work of the school. As a result, they provide leaders with worthwhile support and challenge.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Sharpen self-evaluation processes so that leaders focus precisely on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
- R2. Ensure that pupils have authentic and suitably challenging opportunities to apply their numeracy and digital skills in relevant subjects
- R3. Increase opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their Welsh language skills throughout the school and extend their appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning through a collaborative approach to building strong, positive relationships, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Staff at Croesyceiliog School work together closely to create a culture of respect. This is a central feature of their 'Learning Manifesto'. The strong sense of mutual respect between pupils and staff contributes well to positive working relationships and helps many pupils to make at least sound progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

The school has a clear vision for its curriculum which has been shaped through consultation with pupils, parents, governors, and partner primary schools. Central to this vision is the 'Croesy Five' approach to teaching, which emphasises feedback, application of skills, challenge for all, explanation, and readiness to learn. This supports pupils' holistic development well. Leaders have trialled, evaluated and adapted this approach over time so that the curriculum helps pupils to build their curiosity, teamwork and resilience.

Nearly all teachers have strong subject knowledge, know their pupils well and use praise and encouragement effectively to promote positive attitudes to learning. A few demonstrate notable passion and enthusiasm in their teaching, which inspires a similar energy in pupils. As a result, a minority of pupils are highly enthusiastic learners who are eager to contribute to class discussions and share their ideas. In a few cases where pupils make strong progress, teachers explain challenging topics clearly and use effective questioning to probe and deepen pupils' thinking.

In most lessons, teachers implement the 'Croesy Five' consistently to establish clear routines that ensure pupils arrive punctually, settle quickly to tasks and are ready to learn. They give clear instructions and model subject terminology well to support pupils' use of technical language. These teachers maintain high expectations of behaviour, engagement and participation, which results in orderly classrooms where pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), maintain focus on their learning.

Teaching in many instances enables pupils to make at least secure progress. In these cases, teachers:

- plan for and resource learning well, structuring tasks to build upon pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills sequentially
- use a range of structured group discussions to guide pupils in developing their subject understanding along with their speaking and listening skills
- use questioning suitably to check prior learning

As a result, most pupils respond with enthusiasm, engage purposefully in lessons and contribute willingly to paired and class discussions. Many take pride in the presentation of their work.

In a few lessons, excessive teacher talk, and planning that does not fully meet the needs of all pupils, limits their engagement and does not challenge them well enough. In these lessons, questioning does not probe pupils' understanding deeply enough to extend their thinking and pupils are often passive in their learning.

Most teachers circulate the classroom purposefully to check pupils' engagement and provide timely verbal feedback that helps them refine and improve their work. In the most effective practice, teachers address misconceptions swiftly and guide pupils to enhance the quality of their responses. Many, where relevant, provide pupils with helpful written feedback that shows them how they can improve their work. In many cases, pupils respond well to this and develop their work successfully.

Curriculum

The school has continued to reflect on, and refine, its curriculum to ensure the offer is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all learners, including those with ALN. At Key Stage 4, pupils benefit from a range of general and vocational courses, as well as alternative provision for those who have difficulties accessing mainstream education.

The school provides pupils with useful information to help them make informed choices about their future, particularly through the Year 9 options process and when deciding their next steps during Year 11. In addition, following consultation with parents and pupils, the school has recently helpfully adapted its system of tracking, monitoring and reporting of pupil progress across the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered programme of personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education which draws meaningfully on pupil views and is enriched by a wide range of external expertise. This programme provides helpful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of human rights and diversity.

Provision for religion, value and ethics is planned thoughtfully. Pupils learn about religious traditions, practices, and their influence on individuals and society, along with an exploration of moral dilemmas, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. The school provides appropriate provision for relationships and sexuality education.

Pupils are supported well through their health and well-being lessons and assemblies to develop their understanding of cultural diversity and to learn about the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Likewise, local cultural identity and consideration of pupils' place in the world feature appropriately within the school's

curriculum. In addition, the school is beginning to plan and offer beneficial opportunities for pupils to experience and learn about Welsh history and culture through activities such as Diwrnod Shwmae and Dydd Miwsig Cymru. However, this work is at an early stage of development.

The school provides a vibrant and inclusive programme of extra-curricular opportunities which is promoted to all pupils. School productions, art clubs and a variety of sports activities, support pupils' creative, physical and cultural development. A wide variety of educational visits and enrichment activities complements the curriculum. This includes visits to the theatre, sports tours, and a trip to Rome.

Skills

The school is developing a strong reading culture where pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment. The majority of pupils summarise information effectively, such as when they evaluate the different factors that led to the abolition of the slave trade. They use their inference skills successfully to analyse and interpret meaning in suitably challenging texts. A minority demonstrate high levels of sophistication in their analysis of texts such as Hamlet and Blood Brothers in Year 8. Many older pupils synthesise and summarise information successfully about Christian attitudes to the afterlife in religious education and the discovery of climate change in geography. However, a minority of pupils struggle to decode unfamiliar words and make more complex inferences in challenging reading materials.

Many pupils listen well and respond appropriately to their peers and teachers. They speak clearly and express their ideas confidently, drawing on a wide range of general and subject-specific vocabulary. When working in groups, many pupils make valid contributions and ask thoughtful questions of one another. In a few group and class discussions, pupils offer only brief and underdeveloped verbal responses. Often, teachers do not question or challenge them to improve them well enough.

Many pupils benefit from worthwhile opportunities to write at length for a range of different audiences and purposes. The majority write appropriately, use a broad vocabulary and structure their work suitably. A few write with sophistication and use language and punctuation to create deliberate effects for the reader, such as when they evaluate the work of different artists in art. A minority of pupils continue to make basic errors in their writing, including their spelling of common words and subject-specific vocabulary. These pupils do not always proof-read their work well enough.

In mathematics lessons, the majority of pupils demonstrate secure basic number skills and recall number facts suitably. However, they do not always develop their understanding of mathematics and numeracy concepts well enough. This hinders their ability to recall and

apply important concepts in subjects across the curriculum. When given the opportunity, the majority of pupils apply their mathematical skills thoughtfully to answer questions in context. For example, pupils apply their understanding of tax bands well to calculate and compare accurately the income tax of a range of different professions. In general, in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum, pupils do not show their workings well enough. Although in several subjects many pupils plot simple graphs accurately, they do not always analyse these graphs or use them to solve problems or answer questions. Furthermore, in these subjects, numeracy activities are often provided at too low a level or do not add to pupils' subject understanding.

In information technology (IT) lessons, many pupils use a range of software programmes suitably to design a website or presentation or to create effective animations. When given the opportunity, pupils take and edit photographs and manipulate them to create high quality work in art and photography. In a few cases across the curriculum, digital work is not sufficiently challenging and teachers' expectations for what pupils can do are too low. As a result, pupils merely practise what they can already do rather than develop more advanced skills.

Leaders helpfully analyse a range of data including national tests to identify areas of weakness in pupils' skills and provide beneficial support through targeted interventions. They also use this information to inform their planning for developing pupils' understanding of subject specific vocabulary. There is a wide range of valuable opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy skills across the curriculum. However, provision for their numeracy and digital skills is not as well developed. Furthermore, leaders do not evaluate the impact of this work closely enough, and as a result the strategic planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills is too variable.

Welsh language

The majority of pupils pronounce Welsh vocabulary appropriately and translate basic words from Welsh to English accurately. When provided with encouragement and opportunities, they respond to simple questions and read aloud appropriately. However, in general, pupils lack the confidence to communicate spontaneously in Welsh, often relying too heavily on sentence builders, vocabulary lists or teacher support in their speaking and writing. More able pupils communicate independently, write with an appropriate range of vocabulary and tenses, and produce extended pieces of writing that are well structured. Many pupils use retrieval strategies effectively to locate information in texts. Overall, however, they are not exposed to a wide enough variety of Welsh reading material. Generally, the limited opportunities to practise the language across the school in meaningful contexts restrict pupils' progress and confidence in developing their Welsh language skills.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Croesyceiliog School is an inclusive, caring and nurturing school where staff are supportive of every pupil. It has a tangible sense of belonging and community. Relationships in the school are strong, and pupils' well-being is valued highly, with specific staff being trained in mental health first aid, and pupils trained as 'Interact Peace Ambassadors' to provide support for emotional needs. Pastoral teams provide pupils with a high level of care, support and guidance. Pupils benefit from a wide range of tailored well-being support including well-being hubs, targeted interventions and a drop-in centre, 'In Reach', which provides nurturing care.

A wide range of popular extra-curricular activities enhances pupil experiences and effectively supports pupil well-being, such as 'Croesy Chosen', crochet club and debating. The school community values and promotes inclusivity and diversity, for example through celebrating Pride Week and encouraging pupils to be respectful and considerate of others

Nearly all pupils behave well. They are mature, welcoming and respectful towards adults, visitors and each other. The school has effective processes for promoting good behaviour and for dealing with any incidents of poor behaviour in lessons or around the school. Pupils and staff collaborated to produce the school's behaviour policy and as a result, behaviour systems are understood well by pupils and applied consistently by staff. Staff deal promptly with the very few incidents of alleged bullying and harassment, and restorative approaches are used well to support all pupils involved. Consequently, most pupils feel free from bullying.

The school has developed effective provision on site to support pupils who experience barriers to learning. 'The Bridge' provides a safe inclusive learning environment for pupils in need of alternative curriculum provision and draws on a range of expertise from staff and external partners to support its approach to positive behaviour management. Pupils and parents value the thoughtful arrangements to support pupils' transition into Year 7, as well as when they choose their options in Year 9, and plan their future pathway after Year 11.

The ALN team demonstrates a strong and enthusiastic commitment to promoting the development and progress of pupils who face barriers to learning. They have supported the school to make sound progress towards meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales 2018). The team has established clear and well-structured referral routes, which ensure that pupils' needs are identified promptly and addressed effectively. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) set out pupils' needs and support requirements clearly, and staff can access the information easily. Plans are reviewed regularly with the pupils so that staff understand and respond to the evolving needs of individual pupils. In addition, the school provides these pupils with a broad range

of suitable interventions in literacy, numeracy and well-being. The ALN team monitors pupils' progress from their starting points carefully and uses information to refine and adapt their provision. As a result, many pupils with ALN make at least suitable progress.

Spotlight : Digital One Page Profiles (1PPs)

The school makes good use of digital systems to provide staff with a concise and accessible summary of pupils' learning needs. This information is supplemented by useful guidance on specific needs, which helps staff plan suitably for individual pupils. Pupils with IDPs record informative, helpful short videos explaining their own One Page Profiles (1PPs). In these, they share what they enjoy and how staff can best support them, giving teachers valuable information to inform their planning. Hearing directly from pupils helps staff to understand them better and contributes to building strong, positive relationships across the school community.

Enhanced transition activities, including additional days for Year 6 pupils with ALN and their parents and carers, help pupils settle well into school. This is a notable strength.

The ALN team delivers purposeful training for staff on a wide range of learning needs and strategies. This training has had a positive impact on building the skills and confidence of staff to meet the needs of pupils with ALN. Although comprehensive information on pupils' needs is available, a few teachers do not always make full enough use of this in their lesson planning.

There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility in shaping whole-school initiatives and decisions within the school. These include the elected Pupil Leadership Team, the Senedd and themed 'Ministries'. These provide purposeful forums for pupils to influence change across areas such as inclusion, well-being and the environment. Additional roles such as Criw Cymraeg, eco-committee and ambassadors enable pupils to contribute meaningfully to the school and wider community. Pupils' views are sought, acted upon, and communicated back suitably so that many pupils feel their voice is valued.

The school has a strong culture of promoting good attendance. This is supported by forensic tracking systems, regular monitoring of data and targeted support for pupils with poor attendance. Leaders and the pastoral team identify trends in the rates of absence of both individual and groups of pupils. Key members of staff work effectively with families to address barriers to attendance. Pupils take an active role in monitoring their own attendance data on a weekly basis with their form tutor. The awarding of attendance points helps to motivate pupils, supporting improvements in overall attendance and reducing levels of persistent absence.

In 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, rates of attendance, including those of pupils eligible for free school meals, improved well, and were better than those in similar schools. Unverified data for 2024-2025 indicates that there has been a further increase in the rate of attendance including that of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Leaders have established a strong culture where safeguarding and well-being are viewed as a shared responsibility, underpinned by clear and well-understood arrangements to protect pupils. Bespoke and regular safeguarding training is provided to all staff and governors, which ensures that they remain up to date with current requirements and confident in fulfilling their responsibilities. Staff respond appropriately and in a timely manner to any concerns pupils share with them, ensuring that pupils feel listened to and supported.

The school works proactively to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including in areas such as e-safety and healthy relationships. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to secure pupils' safety and well-being. They keep detailed electronic records of concerns, which are monitored and analysed carefully to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs. This enables leaders to respond promptly and to provide appropriate levels of support. Most pupils report that they feel safe in school and trust staff to take their concerns seriously.

Leading and improving

The headteacher provides thoughtful and compassionate leadership, prioritising the well-being of all within the school community. She has a clearly articulated vision, based on the school's core values of 'Learning, Respect, Ambition' that is understood well by all staff.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has had a notably positive impact on the school. She is supported ably by the senior leadership team, whose roles are planned sensibly and equitably. Together, they have brought about sustained improvements in behaviour, attendance and standards, especially for more vulnerable pupils and have secured a strong culture of safeguarding. Middle leaders are highly committed to the school and the success of its pupils. They have a sound understanding of their roles and work collaboratively to good effect.

Leaders carry out a broad range of self-evaluation activities. The senior team has recently taken well-considered steps to rationalise and streamline these processes. This is starting to help leaders to improve the rigour of their evaluations of teaching and progress. In addition, it is beginning to encourage them to share good practice with regard to this aspect of their work.

Overall, leaders have a sound understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility. They set broadly suitable improvement priorities that focus appropriately on improving teaching and pupil outcomes. However, there is too much variation in how precisely leaders plan for specific improvements. This is because their evaluations do not always focus closely enough on the specific impact of their provision on pupil learning and progress.

Leaders hold staff to account suitably and deal supportively and firmly with underperformance where necessary. There is an appropriate process for all staff to set and review personal development priorities. By centralising information from meetings and self-evaluation activities and sharing it widely, senior leaders have begun to create a culture of consistently high expectations and collaborative accountability across the school.

The school provides staff with a suitable range of professional learning, including valuable opportunities to share good practice. These activities, in general, focus appropriately on whole-school and national priorities. Staff undertake a range of individual professional learning projects that are suitably research-informed and are appropriately evaluated in light of their impact.

The school has a comprehensive and well-considered approach to alleviating the effects of poverty on educational attainment. There is a clear emphasis on this being everyone's responsibility and is an integral part of the whole-school culture of meeting the needs of all pupils. The school supports the well-being and attainment of pupils from low-income households through a wide range of strategies, including curriculum design, practical support with the cost of school life, and mentoring for pupils preparing for their examinations.

Governors are enthusiastic, reflective and committed supporters of the school. They provide leaders with an appropriate level of challenge. They have a detailed knowledge of many aspects of the school's work, informed by regular visits to the school to meet leaders and pupils. The school communicates well and develops effective partnerships with parents and the wider community.

The headteacher and business manager, supported helpfully by governors, monitor the school's budget carefully. The school makes diligent use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant, to reduce the impact of poverty on attainment. In 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, the Key Stage 4 performance of pupils eligible for free school meals was below the average for similar schools. However, unverified school data indicates that, in 2024-2025, the performance of these pupils improved well.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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.

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