

**A report on**

**Ysgol Y Castell**

**Priory Street  
Kidwelly  
Carmarthenshire  
SA17 4TR**

**Date of inspection: October 2025**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Ysgol Y Castell

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Castell
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	218
Pupils of statutory school age	175
Number in nursery classes	32
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 22.9%)	26.6%
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 11.1%)	13.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.6%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/07/2019
Start date of inspection	13/10/2025

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

Ysgol Y Castell provides a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where pupils feel valued and supported. Staff prioritise pupil well-being and work effectively as a team to foster a caring ethos. As a result, pupils behave well and feel confident that their views are respected.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, with pupils contributing meaningfully to its development. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in developing their oracy, reading, and writing skills. They also build secure mathematical understanding and apply their numeracy and digital skills appropriately across the curriculum. However, in a few lessons, pupils are too passive due to over-direction from teachers, and the level of challenge is not consistently high. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations for pupils' progress or plan learning experiences that build well enough on prior learning, in a few lessons.

Where teaching is strongest, lessons are engaging and purposeful, with practical activities that promote skill development. Teachers use questioning effectively and provide helpful verbal feedback to support learning. However, teachers' written feedback to pupils does not lead to improvements in the quality of work often enough.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation processes to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This has led to successful developments, such as enhancing provision for the Welsh language. Leaders do not always evaluate the effectiveness of teaching sharply enough.

## Recommendations

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

- R1. Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement processes to identify and address shortcomings in teaching
- R2. Improve the use of assessment and feedback to support pupils' progress

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

The headteacher, governors and staff ensure the school is a nurturing and inclusive community. Leaders focus successfully on pupils' well-being and personal development. Staff work as a strong team, and they build positive relationships with pupils and parents. Pupils behave well and consistently show respect and kindness to others throughout the school. They are proud of their school.

The school's support for pupils' emotional needs is effective. Staff know their pupils well and work sensitively to meet their needs and help them engage in learning. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress. By the time they leave the school, they develop suitable skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and numeracy, which support their learning across the curriculum.

As they move through school, most pupils make good progress with their English writing skills, from early mark making and writing recipes in the mud kitchen they progress to produce more complex texts. They use a suitable range of punctuation correctly and mature vocabulary that engages the reader. They apply their writing skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum, for example when writing persuasive texts to encourage to inform others about the benefits of giving blood.

Most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well. They speak enthusiastically about their work and school life. For example, younger pupils listen attentively to the contributions of their peers and explain themselves clearly and confidently when working co-operatively on tasks. Most older pupils speak clearly and confidently and moderate their tone, depending on the audience.

Provision to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts is effective. It supports most pupils to make good progress in understanding and applying their skills and knowledge. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum. However, in a few instances, the activities that teachers plan provide insufficient challenge.

Leaders have placed a clear focus on developing the Welsh language. Nearly all staff model Welsh effectively and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to use Welsh. As a result, most pupils develop good Welsh language communication skills as they progress through the school and enjoy learning Welsh.

Staff work collaboratively and successfully to develop an inclusive and interesting curriculum that, overall, provides a suitable breadth of learning across all areas of learning and experience. When planning the curriculum, teachers make good use of pupil voice and

respond promptly to questions that pupils pose or specific interests that pupils display. In the most effective lessons, teachers adapt the course of their teaching to meet the needs and interests of pupils. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' planning of independent cross-curricular skills does not challenge pupils appropriately or develop their skills progressively.

When teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations and move learning on at an appropriate pace. They provide purposeful and practical activities and use questioning and feedback effectively to consolidate and extend learning. In a few lessons, where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is too slow, pupils are passive for extended periods, and the level of challenge is not sufficient. Most Teachers provide effective verbal feedback during lessons to develop pupils' learning and understanding. Written feedback processes do not ensure pupils have enough opportunities to draft, edit and improve their work or extend their learning further.

Leaders ensure that improvement areas focus appropriately on national and local priorities and use a range of suitable self-evaluation processes to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. They have improved certain aspects of the school's provision successfully, for example, the development of Welsh language provision. Regular professional learning opportunities contribute appropriately to aspects of school improvement. However, self-evaluation and improvement processes have not addressed a few inconsistencies in teaching or ensured that the level of challenge in a few lessons and learning activities match pupils' needs.

The school maintains strong links with the local community. Pupils join local events and fundraising activities, building pride and a sense of belonging. These partnerships enrich learning and reinforce the school's central role in the community.

The school actively encourages pupils to develop leadership skills and take on responsibilities, providing them with various opportunities to make decisions. As a result, many pupils have a sense of ownership and responsibility for aspects of school improvement, for example, by leading assemblies on pupils' rights and promoting the use of the Welsh language in the school.

Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. They bring a range of valuable experience and knowledge to their role. They demonstrate a good understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. Governors contribute positively to the school's strategic direction. Governors engage in the first-hand gathering of evidence and meet with staff, which ensures governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and this helps them to challenge leaders appropriately.

## **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/carers 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



## 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 ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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