



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

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: April 2013**

**by**

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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**Publication date: 27/06/2013**

## Context

Caersws Primary School is a community school for pupils aged four to 11 years of age, near to the towns of Llanidloes and Newtown in Powys. It serves the village of Caersws and the surrounding rural areas, although some pupils travel from further afield. The school has a modern building and extensive grounds. The number of pupils on roll has decreased slightly since the last inspection. Currently there are 94 pupils, including 14 under-fives who attend full-time in the nursery and reception class.

Pupils come from homes where English is the first language and no pupil speaks Welsh as their first language. The school states that pupils come from families that are neither socially advantaged nor disadvantaged. Around 13% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below local authority and national averages. Twenty four per cent of pupils are on the school's additional needs register.

There are three full-time teachers and three part-time teachers. The headteacher has been in post since 1999. The senior management team since has increased since the last inspection in 2007.

The individual school budget per pupil for Caersws C.P. School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,473 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Powys is £8,253 and the minimum is £3,087. Caersws C.P. School is 66th out of the 99 primary schools in Powys in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of Caersws C.P. School is adequate because:

- staff provide a high level of care, support and guidance to pupils;
- standards and provision for wellbeing are good;
- the majority of pupils, especially those with additional learning needs, make good progress from their starting point; and
- pupils are courteous and polite and engage well in their learning.

However:

- standards over the years are not consistently high enough;
- leaders and managers do not always respond rapidly enough to variations in the school's performance;
- more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged; and
- pupils' skills in information and communication technology in key stage 2 are underdeveloped.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement at Caersws school are adequate because although:

- the school has successfully embedded new initiatives such as the Foundation Phase;
- there is a well-established staff team who now work closely together to improve outcomes for pupils;
- recent standards have improved, particularly in the Foundation Phase; and
- partnerships with parents are good;
- leaders and managers at all levels do not always address the schools shortcomings with enough rigour. The school's development priorities lack clear strategic direction and high enough levels of challenge.

## Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards of teaching and learning, especially for more able pupils
- R2 Improve pupils' skills in information and communication technology in key stage 2
- R3 Ensure that the Welsh Government's recommended minimum teaching time is met
- R4 Put in place robust safeguarding procedures
- R5 Improve the rigour with which the governing body challenges decisions relating to the curriculum, standards and school finance
- R6 Ensure that there is a sharp focus to the monitoring of standards and teaching and use outcomes to inform school priorities for improvement

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

Many pupils start school with skills below those normally expected for children of their age, especially in language. From these low starting points, nearly all make good progress in their learning throughout the Foundation Phase.

Throughout the school, most pupils listen well and speak confidently in various situations.

Most pupils make appropriate progress in acquiring reading skills. Many make good progress as a result of the good quality intervention strategies. In the Foundation Phase, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of letters and sounds at a good rate. They enjoy stories and many are developing as enthusiastic readers. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read well and use different strategies effectively to tackle unfamiliar words. More able pupils' higher order reading skills of skimming and scanning are developing well. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and genres.

Writing skills in the Foundation Phase are developing well. More able older pupils can write simple sentences readily and use basic punctuation marks with growing confidence. By the time they reach the end of key stage 2, many pupils presentation of their work and the standard of their handwriting are good. Many pupils generally write extensively and consistently for a wide range of purposes and audiences in their work across the curriculum.

Pupils make a good start in learning Welsh in the Foundation Phase. As they progress through the school, pupils' oral skills develop appropriately. However, many pupils lack confidence to answer basic questions outside the classroom environment. In Year 6, standards of reading and writing in Welsh are good.

In the Foundation Phase, pupils demonstrate good skills in information and communication technology (ICT). However, in key stage 2, pupils' ICT skills are underdeveloped.

Pupils' attainment at outcome 5 in the Foundation Phase in 2012, for personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, was considerably better than the family average. Outcomes in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development at the expected level were below and considerably below family averages respectively. The attainment of more able pupils at outcome 6 in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity placed outcomes in the top 25% of those for similar schools. However, pupil outcomes in mathematical development and language, literacy and communication skills placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. The relative performance of boys and girls generally reflects the national picture, where boys achieve less well than girls.

In key stage 2, pupils' attainment at level 4, for the last four years in English, mathematics and science has fluctuated from the bottom 25% to the higher 50% of that for similar schools. In 2012, pupil performance in English and science was above the family average but in mathematics it was slightly below. Girls outperform the boys in all three subjects at the expected and higher levels.

Over time, pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional needs achieve appropriately in line with their abilities.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and think that teachers support them well in their learning and general wellbeing. Most pupils understand how they can keep themselves healthy. They understand what constitutes a healthy diet and engage in a wide array of physical activities. The school provides a range of after-school clubs that enhance wellbeing effectively.

The use of playground buddies during break and lunchtimes is particularly effective. Many pupils commented on the role of these children have in supporting and helping younger pupils to mix and play well together.

Good working relationships between pupils and staff help create a calm and orderly classroom environment where the majority of pupils apply themselves purposefully to their learning. Nearly all pupils are courteous, considerate and well behaved. They are confident, open and welcoming.

The school council and eco-council provide good forums for pupils to air their views and to engage in a variety of activities. However, their impact on the curriculum or on the wider life of the school is currently underdeveloped.

Attendance is improving. It has risen gradually since the last inspection to exceed the Welsh Government's targets but it remains in the lower 50% when compared to levels in similar schools.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Adequate**

Overall, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum and an appropriate range of learning experiences, which meet the needs of most pupils. Topics are engaging and activities often make use of the local area. However, the amount of teaching time in the school day does not meet the minimum recommended by the Welsh Government.

In the best examples, teachers' planning for literacy and numeracy development is detailed and appropriate. However, apart from in mathematics, planning does not always provide enough challenge for pupils of differing abilities. For example, the overuse of worksheets often inhibits pupils' ability to work independently at a level appropriate to their ability.

Teachers plan well for ICT skills in the Foundation Phase. However, in key stage 2 pupils' experiences of aspects of ICT do not fully meet requirements. For example, pupils do not learn to use spread sheets, simulations or modelling technology.

The curriculum at Caersws embraces Welsh life and heritage. This is evident in the cultural life of the school. However, planning for the progression in the development of Welsh language skills throughout the school is underdeveloped.

The school offers a range of experiences to enable pupils to further their understanding of sustainability. For example, pupils use recycled materials to complete a large-scale collage. A wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs enriches the school's curriculum.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Teachers have good up-to-date knowledge of the subjects they teach and often develop pupils' understanding well. In all lessons, relationships between staff and pupils are good and this impacts positively on pupils' wellbeing. Support staff contribute well to the quality of pupils' learning.

At the start of lessons, teachers communicate lesson objectives and success criteria clearly to all pupils. Where teaching is most effective, staff motivate, challenge and engage pupils well, using both open and closed questioning effectively. In these lessons, teachers assess pupils' learning and adapt their teaching accordingly. However, this good practice is not consistent. In weaker lessons, the pace of learning for older pupils is too slow and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are insufficiently high. Work is not well differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils.

All teachers mark work conscientiously. Marking often includes a comment on pupils' achievement, but few of these provide clear guidance to pupils to help them to improve their work. The school uses a wide range of assessments. However, not all teachers make good use of this information to inform planning or to track pupils' progress effectively as they move through the school. Strategies to assess pupils' learning during lessons and pupils' assessment of their own work are at an early stage of development. Levelling of pupils' work at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is broadly accurate.

Reports for parents and carers give a good picture of pupils' achievements and wellbeing.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate**

Learning experiences promote pupils' personal development well including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development. There are good relationships, based on mutual respect and courtesy, between staff and pupils. Good procedures exist for developing pupils' wellbeing. Many pupils take responsibility, show initiative and develop an understanding of living in a community.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator uses assessment information effectively to monitor the progress of all pupils with special educational needs. She allocates support and advises colleagues on appropriate and effective strategies for individuals and groups. The school is developing robust systems to measure the impact of these interventions on the attainment of pupils, but their use is at an early stage of development.



Pupils have individual plans, which the co-ordinator reviews regularly in partnership with parents. However, on occasions insufficiently clear or specific targets do not contribute effectively to helping pupils to improve their performance.

The school has effective links with a wide variety of external agencies, for example the Barnardos charity. These impact significantly on the wellbeing and attainment of all pupils.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not fully meet requirements. A health and safety issue was brought to the school's attention during the inspection.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school has a positive ethos where all pupils are encouraged to treat each other fairly and equally and with respect and dignity. The school actively promotes the understanding of equality and diversity.

Lunch and after school clubs, for example the gardening club, make a valuable contribution to the learning environment. The school grounds are extensive and include a conservation area. Learning areas are bright and cheerful with informative wall displays. They celebrate pupils' achievement, stimulate their interest and enhance learning.

Learning resources are generally of a suitable quality and largely meet pupils' individual needs. However, the provision of ICT equipment is limited, particularly within key stage 2 classrooms.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Leadership: Adequate**

The school has recently adopted a new leadership structure. All teachers now have leadership responsibilities, and they now work together effectively as a team. For example, the newly appointed co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy have worked hard to reverse declining standards in their subjects and to support all staff to improve learning. The school implements national and local policies and initiatives, such as the Foundation Phase, efficiently and effectively. However, the school's own development priorities do not always have a clear strategic direction and high enough levels of challenge.

As a result of intervention by the local authority to support the school, the governing body has recently undertaken significant training in their role. This has given them the skills and confidence to challenge the school's leaders and hold them to account. However, it is still too early to see the full impact of the governing body's work in sustained higher outcomes for pupils.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The school makes use of self-evaluation to identify broad areas for school improvement. Staff contribute effectively to the self-evaluation process, and routinely make use of data to identify priorities. However, parents and pupils do not currently have opportunities to contribute their views.

The school development plan contains relevant priorities for improvement, although it lacks the clear success criteria and milestones necessary to measure their impact. The limited range of monitoring activities do not have a clear focus; as a result, monitoring has a minimal impact on improving standards. For example, although teachers support each other in assessing and levelling pupils' work accurately, leaders do not regularly scrutinise books to monitor consistency in teachers' marking, national curriculum coverage or pupils' progress.

Teachers routinely share their professional skills and knowledge to support their colleagues. They are involved in networks of professional learning communities with other local schools.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has a very positive partnership with parents. They receive regular newsletters and information about many aspects of school life. The effective parental partnership results in pupils' extremely positive attitudes to school. Parents also support the school curriculum by talking about their occupations and sharing their talents, for example in making Cornish pasties, to support Year 5 and 6 with a food technology project. The 'friends of the school' raise significant funds to supplement the school's resources, most recently in purchasing new reading books.

The school has many partnerships that impact strongly on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, the school has a close relationship with the local Friendship Club, where retired people share important social occasions with the pupils, such as the harvest festival or St David's Day concert.

A carefully structured induction programme ensures that nursery age children settle easily into school routines. Partnerships with local secondary schools are very effective and ensure smooth transition to secondary education. The school makes careful and timely transition arrangements for pupils, especially those with additional learning needs. Support for pupils who are potentially at risk of underachievement, for example through Powys Young Carers, is particularly effective.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The school has a deficit budget, which has accumulated over recent years. The governing body has taken positive steps to plan and manage the repayment of the debt through the local authority. The governors' finance committee now monitors school spending carefully, and reports verbally to the full governing body. Sub-committees do not keep written minutes of their meetings, and so there is no written record over time of discussions or decisions made.

Despite this, the school makes satisfactory use of its current funding and resources and pupils achieve adequate standards. The school deploys teaching and support staff well and, between them, they have the knowledge and expertise to cover most areas of the school's curriculum. There are adequate arrangements for staff development and for providing preparation, planning and assessment time for teachers. The school therefore gives adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Pupils' performance in the Foundation Phase outcome indicator in 2012, was above family and national averages. Pupils' performance in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural development was considerably better than the family average. Outcomes in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development at the expected level were slightly below and considerably below family averages respectively. The school does significantly better than most of other family schools in the proportion of more able pupils attaining above the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity and mathematical development. Language literacy and communication skills are the weakest area of learning with more able pupils attaining below the levels attained by pupils in other schools in the same family.

In 2012, when compared to attainment for pupils in similar schools across Wales, pupil outcomes in the Foundation Phase, at the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, were in the highest 25%. Pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication skills, together with mathematical development, placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. More able pupils' results at above the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity and in language, literacy and communication skills placed the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools. The attainment of more able pupils in mathematical development placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. Girls marginally outperform boys at the expected level in the three areas of learning, but girls considerably outperform boys at the higher than expected outcomes.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance over time in the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, is the same as the family but considerably higher than the local and national averages. Attainment at the expected level in English is considerably above family and national averages. In mathematics, attainment is slightly below the family average but higher than the national averages. In science the school performs above family, local and national averages. More able pupils' performance at level 5 in English, is above the family averages. However, performance in mathematics and science at the higher levels is considerably below family averages. Gender performance is variable but generally, girls outperform boys in all three subjects, particularly at the higher than expected levels.

In 2012, when compared to performance levels in schools in similar circumstances across Wales, pupils' attainment in key stage 2 at the expected level placed the school amongst the top 25% for English, the lowest 25% for mathematics and in the lower 50% of schools for science. More able pupils' attainment at above the expected level fluctuated between the higher 50% of that for similar schools to the bottom 25% in the three subjects. This shows that pupils' attainment at the expected and higher levels for the last four years in English, mathematics and science is variable.

Pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional needs make good progress.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Eleven parents completed the questionnaire. Responses were slightly below national norms overall.

All parents say that:

- their child likes school;
- their child was helped to settle in well when he / she started in school;
- their child is making good progress;
- staff expect children to work hard and do their best;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child receives appropriate support in relation to any particular individual needs; and
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Most parents say that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- teaching is good;
- the homework given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- staff treat children fairly and with respect;
- their child is safe in school; and
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress.

Many parents say that:

- pupils behave well in school;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- the school helps their child become more mature and take on responsibility;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits; and
- the school is well run.

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

Sixty two pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. All their responses were better than national norms.

All pupils say that:

- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- they feel safe in school;

- they are doing well at school;
- teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress; and
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- there are lots of chances at school for them to get regular exercise; and
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find the work hard.

Most pupils say that:

- homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and
- nearly all pupils behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Many pupils say that:

- the school deals well with bullying;
- the school teaches them how to keep healthy; and
- other children behave well and they can get their work done.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Peter Roach	Reporting Inspector
Fiona Arnison	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Morien Wynne Morgan	Peer Inspector
Roy Gardner	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11

schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.