



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Carreg Hir**

**Old Road  
Briton Ferry  
Neath  
SA11 2ET**

**Date of inspection: January 2023**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Carreg Hir

Name of provider	Ysgol Carreg Hir
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	405
Pupils of statutory school age	306
Number in nursery classes	57
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 23.0%)	36.6%
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 16.1%)	17.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.6%
Date of headteacher appointment	June 2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	23/01/2023

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.

## Overview

Ysgol Carreg Hir is a very nurturing place for pupils and staff alike. The headteacher, teachers and support staff take good care of the pupils and want them to succeed in learning and in life. Well-being is placed at the centre of the school's ethos. There is an overall feeling of community and a strong sense of belonging in the school. It offers bespoke support for all pupils, including those with individual needs.

All pupils receive a very warm welcome and enjoy coming to school and being part of such a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers and support staff are there to help when needed. They offer pupils a range of learning opportunities, all of which help to keep pupils interested in their learning. However, these do not consistently provide sufficient challenge for pupils to support their progress and development in their skills as independent learners, for example in the standards they achieve in writing and teachers' use of assessment methods.

Pupils are proud of the school and exhibit positive attitudes to learning. They understand that staff expect them to respect everyone in the school community and to behave well. The engagement of pupils in their learning is a notable strength of the school. Staff offer a stimulating environment that extends pupils' learning outdoors. Leaders plan exceptionally well for this to enhance pupils' learning and well-being experiences.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership and, in general, know the school well. The headteacher has correctly identified important areas of the school's work that need improving, for example pupils' spoken Welsh skills. This work is having a notable impact on younger pupils' skills. However, evaluation and improvement processes are not always sharp enough to support progress in all areas of the curriculum. The headteacher values the opinions of staff, pupils, parents and governors, and uses these to improve the school. Staff trust and work well together to provide consistent support for pupils and each other.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve pupil progress in skills, especially in writing, through greater challenge for more able pupils
- R2 Ensure that self-evaluation processes are focused to improve aspects of teaching and learning, and that improvement priorities are specific and measurable
- R3 Develop effective assessment methods across the school to support pupils to know what and how to make improvements to their work

## **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 the impact of leaders' investment in developing the outdoor environment to extend and consolidate learning experiences and promote pupils' well-being, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time at Ysgol Carreg Hir, many pupils, including those considered vulnerable, thrive and make good progress from their starting points. Pupils enter the school with mixed abilities in their language skills. Many younger pupils communicate their needs using single words and gestures. As pupils progress, their skills improve well and many express themselves confidently. In Years 3 and 4, nearly all are keen to communicate their thoughts and opinions. Many older pupils discuss ethical issues maturely, such as the use of landfill. Most pupils listen respectfully during discussions, and a few are beginning to build upon the ideas of others.

Younger pupils' reading skills develop well. By Year 1, most acquire a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and how sounds combine to form words. As they progress through the school, pupils identified as being more able read familiar words at speed. Generally, pupils from Years 3 to 6 discuss their reading well, but their deduction and inferencing skills need consolidating. By the final years of school, many pupils read with increasing expression, fluency and self-correction strategies.

Most younger pupils show enthusiasm for mark making. As pupils move through the school, they make adequate progress in their writing. Many pupils use well-formed, simple sentences to convey their ideas. Older pupils develop a sound understanding of the characteristics of different genres, such as biographies. They punctuate their work accurately using basic punctuation, and occasionally use more advanced marks. However, many pupils' use of punctuation in relation to their stage of development lacks consistency.

In general, teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge and opportunities for pupils to apply their skills freely in their writing. This limits the progress of those pupils who have developed their independent writing skills effectively. As a result, their ability to extend their writing, improve its quality and use a range of punctuation is underdeveloped. As a result, older pupils' writing lacks craft and does not reflect the quality of their spoken language.

Most younger pupils develop their phonic spelling ability well. A few older pupils spell increasingly complex words with reasonable accuracy. Nearly all pupils organise the layout of their written work well. However, most pupils' formation of letters is often not aligned or finished enough to develop a fluid handwriting style.

Nearly all pupils across the school present their mathematics and numeracy work neatly. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in developing their early number skills and many develop a sound understanding of place value. They extend their learning to create physical and written number sentences beyond twenty. As pupils move through the school, most develop sound methods of calculation and apply these successfully to problem-solving activities. Many older pupils calculate fractions and percentages precisely. They use data and construct an appropriate range of graphs, pie and tally charts to analyse multiple sets of data. For example, pupils apply their skills effectively by researching the gender and age distribution of

the population of Briton Ferry. More able pupils solve problems and check whether their answers are reasonable and accurate but are often not challenged sufficiently in their work.

The school has a strong Welsh language ethos and most pupils use familiar language patterns well across the school. Nearly all younger pupils respond enthusiastically to basic instructions and greetings and count to ten in Welsh. By Year 2, many pupils ask and answer simple questions confidently. By Year 6, many express their likes and dislikes confidently, extending their answers by giving a reason or adding further detail.

Many pupils develop their digital skills well for a range of purposes including making presentations, programming and the use and representation of data. For example, younger pupils successfully program a device to follow map directions and older pupils produce databases to support their work on healthy eating.

Across the school, pupils develop their physical and creative skills well. Younger pupils confidently communicate to choreograph, practise and refine their techniques to produce a sequence of steps for a medieval dance, performed to traditional Welsh music. Older pupils develop team and co-ordination skills well, and benefit from their engagement with local sports teams and extra-curricular clubs. They also discuss and experiment to consider the use of line and colour to produce tones and tints to represent emotions, such as when creating portraits of King Charles.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils arrive at school eager to learn. There are strong, trusting relationships between pupils and adults, which contribute positively to nearly all pupils' well-being. Most pupils are aware of how to stay safe online and are extremely positive about feeling safe, secure and able to share their thoughts and feelings with adults in school. Nearly all pupils feel that they are treated fairly and know whom to speak to when asking for support and help.

During break times and lunchtimes, most pupils are active and use the extensive and large spaces to exercise and play. Support staff engage the youngest pupils in play activities and support them enthusiastically to join in games. Nearly all pupils understand and accept the need for healthy choices for snacks and this is embedded across the school successfully. Many pupils access a range of extra-curricular and after-school activities to develop their physical skills and promote their well-being, including football, fitness and outdoor learning.

Nearly all pupils have opportunities to be part of leadership groups, for example the school council, well-being and curriculum. Members of these groups take advantage of opportunities to present to pupils and governors at meetings. For example, the Well-being Warriors have impacted positively on pupils' healthy choices by creating and sharing a promotional video on healthy lifestyles.

Many pupils enjoy learning and have a desire to achieve. Nearly all have very strong working relationships with both staff and their peers and this is a strength of the school. Many pupils are enthusiastic learners who apply themselves positively to new experiences. They are confident to speak and are both engaging and courteous to

visitors. They work effectively with their peers in pairs or groups and support each other's learning well. They treat the contributions of others with respect and respond positively to their ideas. Pupils' understanding of the four purposes of the curriculum is at an early stage of development. However, activities around equality and gender are deepening many older pupils' understanding of ethical issues successfully, for instance when pupils learn about Qatar during the football World Cup.

Across the school, nearly all pupils are kind and relate well to each other. They demonstrate respect in the way they interact in classes and around the school. They are polite towards each other, staff and visitors. Nearly all pupils show good behaviour in lessons during formal learning sessions, around the school and when playing with their friends. Most pupils work well together and collaborate successfully. They are happy to share their views and ideas while respectfully listening to what others have to say by taking turns to speak and contribute. For example, younger pupils listen well to extended explanations and reasons for using different recycling bins.

Nearly all pupils move around the school considerately. Older pupils develop their abilities to attend to tasks well and remain focused throughout their lessons. Most settle quickly and concentrate for increasing periods of time in lessons. They show interest in and engage well with their learning, especially when attempting new, exciting tasks. For example, pupils discuss which local amenity should close and then justify their reasons to persuade their friends of their decision. Generally, across the school, many pupils sustain concentration and complete their tasks and bring them to a successful conclusion. Overall, pupils understand the feedback provided by their teachers and are beginning to respond to it effectively to improve their learning.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Nearly all teachers and support staff across the school have strong working relationships with pupils. Classrooms and the wealth of learning spaces provide safe and inviting environments where nearly all pupils interact calmly and respectfully with each other. Support staff are allocated effectively across the school and work skilfully with pupils to support their learning. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are supported effectively and achieve well. Nearly all staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They show care and respect for pupils, which has a positive impact on nearly all pupils' well-being and engagement in learning.

The school is developing its curriculum appropriately. Its recently published curriculum summary clearly articulates the school's vision for the Curriculum for Wales. Overall, the school promotes the values of the curriculum effectively with all partners. Staff continue to recognise the need to review and refine the curriculum consistently to ensure that it aligns with the school's priorities.

Many teachers provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their listening, speaking and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. For example, nearly all teachers in the younger classes plan learning activities in all areas of the school to develop a range of skills. These build coherently on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Provision to develop pupil digital skills is sound. For example, older pupils use a range of presentations, spreadsheets and databases with accuracy. The school's provision and support for reading are appropriate. In

particular, pupils accessing support programmes make good or better progress. Currently, planning and provision for the teaching of writing do not support pupils to develop their skills well enough.

Teachers use 'hooks' or a problem at the beginning of each half term to effectively engage most pupils. This encourages them to think creatively about the direction of their learning. For example, younger children learn about the history of Welsh castles using the prompt 'Where would you build a castle in Briton Ferry?'. Teachers are beginning to adapt their planning to provide real life learning experiences. In a majority of classes, teachers deliver lessons at an appropriate pace. They share the aims of the learning activities clearly and use an appropriate range of resources to engage pupils' interest. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers overly direct activities, which inhibits a minority of pupils from developing their independent skills appropriately.

Teachers make appropriate use of a variety of the school's assessment methods to monitor and support the progress of pupils effectively. Most teachers and support staff use verbal feedback skilfully during lessons to help pupils take their next steps and move forward in their learning. In many books, teachers use the opportunity to provide valuable written feedback, and in the best cases feedback allows pupils to improve the quality of their work and make progress. For example, in the classes of the younger pupils, most pupils understand and interact regularly on what and how they will improve their work. Many teachers use a variety of appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding and to rectify any misconceptions. However, examples of teachers probing to extend pupils' thinking are less frequent.

Staff work successfully to develop highly effective experiences for outdoor learning. For example, younger pupils develop skills in problem-solving and collaboration, and exercise their precise use of fine motor skills to practise making twig fishing rods. Leaders make careful investments and show great commitment to improving outdoor provision to benefit all learners.

Staff organise educational trips and visitors to the school to enhance provision across the curriculum. For example, they arrange visits from a range of sports' coaches, including the Ospreys rugby club, to support pupils' physical skills. By working with external agencies, staff provide stimulating opportunities to develop pupils as lifelong learners. For example, collaborating with local cooking schools and theatre groups helps to raise pupils' aspirations.

The learning environment effectively promotes the Welsh language and culture. For example, pupils develop a celebration of Wales with a communal display, Ein Cymru Ni. Teachers use daily Welsh language sessions to revise and secure learning, and this has a positive effect on pupils' confidence in speaking. Welsh plays a dominant role in the life of the school. For instance, it is heard regularly around the school in informal situations. The school promotes Welsh through its signage in communal areas and the classrooms. The consistent and systematic approach to developing pupils' Welsh-speaking and listening skills is effective.

Reports to parents are very informative. They summarise pupil progress well and outline the next steps in learning to strive for improvement.



## Care, support and guidance

The quality of care, support and guidance is a strength of the school. Staff place a high priority on the well-being of pupils. Support for pupils' emotional and social needs is met successfully through extensive and purposeful support programs to support individuals and groups. Information gathered through whole-school assessments is used effectively to plan purposeful support and monitor the next steps in support and learning.

The school has effective pupil committee groups that provide pupils with opportunities to contribute to, and impact on, decision-making at a whole-school level. For example, the school council organises fundraising events, anti-bullying week and a campaign to promote punctuality. There are highly effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Nearly all older pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy diet and the need to exercise. For example, all pupils eat fruit at break times and many pupils take part in the daily mile to build fitness. The school has expansive outdoor areas that support both physical health and well-being effectively. These areas are well used for learning outdoors, playtimes and after-school clubs. The Well-being Warriors committee are proactive in making changes to healthy eating and fitness. For example, they promote the eating of fruit only at break times.

There are robust systems in place to identify, monitor and review the progress of pupils with ALN. The knowledge and expertise of the ALN co-ordinator and the processes are highly effective. She has empowered all staff, who as a result understand their roles and make effective contributions toward identified pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils with additional needs make strong progress from their starting points. Staff work closely with parents, carers and a range of outside agencies to develop plans and support pupils' individual needs, including those pupils who are educated off site.

The school's provision for understanding wider world heritage and culture is developing appropriately. During Black History Month, pupils studied black Welsh heroes including Betty Campbell and enjoyed a visit from the author Jessica Dunrod. Pupils benefit from the opportunities provided to discuss issues relating to equality and the rights of others. This was demonstrated through a presentation, discussing cultural and religious differences and issues of human rights in relation to LGBTQ+ communities, for example. School staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the rights of the child through worthwhile assemblies and learning activities.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities to broaden and widen pupils' experiences. These include learning about the wider world through visitors who come into school to discuss their roles to prepare pupils for opportunities in the world of work. There are a wide range of educational visits to support and enrich learning. For example, a recent trip to a recent science and technology museum supported learning about electricity and electrical circuits. Extensive and varied after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities enable pupils to develop their self-confidence and participate as a member of a team. Sports' clubs including football, fitness and outdoor learning are well attended by many pupils.

The headteacher and staff consider pupils' safety and well-being to be paramount. This emphasis creates a very strong safeguarding culture within the school. Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively, and all incidents related to bullying are recorded and tracked appropriately. The systems to support and challenge pupils with low attendance are supportive and robust. The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and works hard to improve this.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher is instrumental in creating and sustaining a welcoming and caring community. She provides thoughtful and compassionate leadership. Along with the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team, she has worked tirelessly to amalgamate three local school communities to create a strong team ethos amongst staff and pupils. The leadership team is committed to the success of the school and places well-being, care and support at the centre of their vision for the school and its community. Staff have positive and professional working relationships, which support the school's ethos effectively. Pupils and staff treat each other with care and respect. Senior leaders work together with all staff to ensure effective provision that supports the well-being of pupils and staff.

The headteacher distributes responsibilities well. For example, the team leading the development of the new curriculum work together effectively. They fulfil their roles with enthusiasm and efficiency. Leaders, governors, teachers and pupils participate in a suitable range of monitoring activities, such as lesson observations and learning walks. Leaders and staff use these activities, along with the scrutiny of pupils' work, to appropriately gather a range of suitable information to inform their self-evaluation processes and identify the school's strengths and areas for development. However, these monitoring and improvement processes are not always sufficiently focused and measurable, and at times do not focus sharply enough on improving outcomes for pupils.

Governors are very supportive of the school and have well-established professional links with the headteacher and staff. The headteacher keeps them well informed and supports them to challenge the school in their role as a critical friend. They receive regular updates about progress towards the school's priorities. For example, the ALN co-ordinator meets with specific governors to explain the school's progress towards the reform of provision for ALN in Wales.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances prudently, balancing short-term and longer-term needs appropriately, and ensuring that spending on the pupils is prioritised. Governors and leaders have made effective use of available resources to develop the outdoors, which includes a variety of areas that staff use successfully to enhance pupils' learning and well-being. For example, the outdoor classroom is fully equipped to accommodate large groups of pupils. It is well resourced with natural materials to support the development of pupils' skills, which pupils then transfer to a range of different contexts.

The school makes effective use of the pupil development grant to provide extra support for vulnerable pupils. As a result, most identified pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Governors help to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking that supports

nearly all pupils having a clear understanding of how to eat and maintain a healthy diet.

The performance management of staff is well co-ordinated and objectives link suitably to the school's improvement priorities and ensure a collaborative approach to development among staff. As a result, there has been progress in the standards of pupils' Welsh oracy skills, for example. Staff share good practice within the school by undertaking learning walks, lesson observations and working together to develop aspects of the school's curriculum. Leaders address national and local priorities suitably and plan for specific improvements in different areas of provision.

The school is well resourced, with sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to deliver all aspects of the curriculum. Teaching assistants provide worthwhile support for individuals and groups of pupils. The extensive outdoor area has been developed thoughtfully by the school. As a result, pupils develop a wide range of skills from the real life learning activities they experience outdoors.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the needs of pupils, families and the local community. Staff welcome parents to school and communicate effectively with them to ensure that they are aware of day-to-day activities.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](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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