



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

A report on

Cross Ash C.P. School

**Cross Ash
Abergavenny
Monmouthshire
NP7 8PL**

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

About Cross Ash C.P. School

Name of provider	Cross Ash C.P. School
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	174
Pupils of statutory school age	164
Number in nursery classes	0
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 23.7%)	5.4%
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 13.2%)	2.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	06/06/2016
Start date of inspection	07/05/2024

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

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

Overview

Cross Ash Primary School is an inclusive, welcoming, and safe community where pupils thrive and enjoy a wide range of engaging and exciting learning experiences. Strong working relationships and deep mutual respect between pupils and staff create a particularly supportive ethos that nurtures exceptionally good behaviour, consideration for others and a culture of high expectations. The school's leadership team, staff and governors have established a clear and shared vision for the school, based on securing high levels of well-being, good progress in learning for all pupils, and a strong culture of safeguarding.

Most pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and this helps them to progress well as they move through the school. Young pupils settle well into school and establish good patterns of learning and behaviour. By the end of their time at the school, pupils' passion for developing new skills, finding things out and solving problems is clear. Pupils develop a strong sense of Welsh heritage and culture however they do not make sufficient progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Teachers are developing a creative curriculum for pupils to build on their knowledge and to deepen their understanding of their locality and wider area. They provide beneficial life experiences for the pupils and engage them well in their learning. Although staff praise pupils for their achievements regularly, feedback does not always enable pupils to independently improve their work.

Leaders and staff have made strong progress in developing a new curriculum that suits their pupils, their community, and their vision. They work well in collaboration with other schools to develop their approaches to teaching and learning. Across the school, teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils benefit from interesting lessons, learn to challenge themselves, and make good progress. The school has developed its outdoor areas well to create an exciting and engaging learning environment for pupils.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils at Cross Ash Primary School make good progress from their individual starting points. This includes those pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households.

As they progress through the school, nearly all pupils develop into confident and articulate speakers. They listen attentively, value and respect the opinions of others and respond appropriately. Their language skills develop effectively, and they use ambitious vocabulary when discussing specific topics. For example, the youngest pupils discuss and decide the best materials to use to create a minibeast hotel. The oldest pupils discuss their ideas confidently, for example when deciding on how best to construct formal letters and debating whether tourism in Wales should be banned.

The school fosters a love of reading. Pupils in Year 1 use their developing skills to independently read recipes to double and halve ingredients during a maths lesson, and Year 4 pupils use their reading skills to research information about the history of the Olympic Games. By the time they leave the school, nearly all pupils are enthusiastic, confident, and expressive readers, who make informed personal choices about the books they read and the authors they prefer.

Across the school, nearly all pupils' writing skills develop effectively and, by the time they leave school, they become competent writers. In the reception class pupils develop their confidence when writing lists in the role play ice-cream parlour and practising letter formation in the painting area. Older pupils apply their writing skills well in a range of contexts across the curriculum. They develop as confident writers with the ability to write at length and for different purposes. For example, the oldest pupils use metaphors and alliteration successfully in their story writing, rhetorical questions and emotive language when writing persuasive texts.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding. They develop a strong understanding and rapid recall of number facts and relationships. For example, pupils link multiplication with division. Most pupils handle data well and develop a sound understanding of shape, space and measures. Across the school nearly all pupils apply their numeracy skills well in other aspects of their learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 successfully analyse sophisticated mathematical data for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics and discuss their findings comparing athletes' information.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about the Welsh language. The youngest pupils use simple vocabulary confidently and successfully when responding to questions about their topic on minibeast. In Year 6 pupils demonstrate an expanding range of vocabulary. They ask and answer complex questions readily. However, pupils' progress in developing their Welsh language is variable across the school.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils develop strong digital skills and use them successfully to support their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils use digital devices competently. For example, they use simple coding purposefully to

create butterfly images when consolidating their understanding of symmetry. Pupils in Year 4 create anti-bullying presentations and videos. Year 6 pupils produce spreadsheets and databases, for example when budgeting for the end of year barbecue comparing different shopping lists and costs.

Pupils develop their artistic and expressive skills well through a wide range of stimulating and engaging activities. They make decisions about which media to use in their artwork, and use colour effectively to produce high quality, vibrant drawings and paintings. Nearly all pupils produce work they are proud of as they apply the methods of Welsh artists, such as Kyffin Williams and Rhiannon Roberts. Nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in music lessons and display a high level of concentration and perseverance.

Across the school, pupils' physical skills develop well. The youngest pupils begin to develop their fine motor skills and handle tools such as paint brushes with increasing control and finesse. Outdoors they climb and use tyre swings in the woodland area with confidence. Older pupils develop stamina by completing timed relays in their science investigation. Most display a positive attitude to physical activity.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The school's approach to securing well-being for staff and pupils is a strength. Most pupils are proud of their school. They are polite and treat their peers, staff, and visitors with respect. Most pupils work and play together happily and across the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils attend school regularly and arrive at school happily and enthusiastically, ready to begin their day. Older pupils are caring and nurturing towards younger pupils and this positivity permeates the school.

Most pupils develop a thorough understanding of their human rights. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of the importance of fairness, equality, and sustainability. A good example of this is the work of the school and Eco-committee in promoting sustainability through the regular use of the class gardens for growing their own fruit and vegetables.

From an early age, most pupils develop extremely positive attitudes to learning. They engage well with the range of experiences on offer. Most pupils focus suitably on their learning and manage any distraction well. They respond well to purposeful feedback that supports them to improve their work during lessons. However, pupils do not have a secure understanding of their next steps in their learning.

The school's inclusive ethos helps pupils feel safe. Nearly all pupils feel that staff support them to deal effectively with any issues that arise. They understand how to stay safe online, for example by not sharing personal information.

Pupils contribute effectively to school improvement through their leadership roles. The school's pupil leadership groups make a tangible difference to the life and work of the school. For example, the school council has created a child-friendly equality and fairness leaflet to promote the school's policy. These opportunities are particularly successful in developing pupils' leadership skills and their understanding of their role in society.

Pupils have opportunities to problem-solve in a variety of contexts. For example, older pupils independently engage in group work in the outdoor environment to solve a human knot problem, which develops their thinking and collaboration skills.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and choose healthy snacks to eat during morning break. Pupils of all ages benefit from the wide range of after-school clubs and activities on offer, which help to develop physical and social skills and enjoyment in school life. For example, the 'Wild Cubs' club planned and built their own shelters to use on a residential trip, which developed their teamwork and problem-solving skills.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum provides pupils with a range of engaging, exciting and inclusive learning experiences that meet the pupils needs and interests well. Staff collaborate effectively to plan topics that combine areas of learning and experience purposefully. Pupils share what they would like to learn with teachers and these ideas are included in the planned learning experiences.

Staff create purposeful and stimulating environments. For example in the early years pupils develop their curiosity and independence in the well-planned and developed learning environment. The school's outdoor learning is a strength. Nearly all pupils enjoy beneficial opportunities to learn through learning opportunities in the school's woodland area, where they develop important skills such as teamwork and problem solving whilst also improving their well-being.

Teaching is effective across the school and teachers have a secure knowledge of the curriculum. They provide clear explanations to ensure that pupils understand what they need to do. Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning. This ensures that pupils make appropriate progress in developing their skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum, for example when producing information leaflets about what it means to be Welsh, and when budgeting for the end of year barbeque. However, across the school many teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills.

Teachers plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their personal identity and culture. They create learning experiences that enable pupils to celebrate the rich history and geography of their local area, for example through visits to local castles and through participation in the local and the national Eisteddfod.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills and they make good use of local expertise within the community. For example, musicians run valuable sessions using a range of instruments weekly. The school provides a range of rich and inclusive experiences including residential trips that support pupils to develop their social, emotional and physical skills successfully. Visitors from the community regularly share their expertise and inspire and raise pupils' aspirations about their future careers.

The school provides a range of stimulating visits to support the curriculum, including trips to the local church and Big Pit National Coal Museum. Older pupils participate in well planned, developmentally appropriate residential opportunities, from camping on the school grounds to a visit to North Wales.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a warm and welcoming community where pupils' welfare is a high priority. The whole-school strategy for well-being supports pupils' personal, social and emotional needs well. It helps to ensure that pupils enjoy coming to school and engage positively with a wide range of learning experiences. Staff and pupils work together effectively and show a high level of respect for one another.

Leaders have a clear strategic overview of pupils' needs across the school. They monitor pupils' progress closely. Staff forge strong relationships with families to gain a full picture of each pupil and use the information thoughtfully to determine how best to support them in school and at home. The school deploys staff effectively to support pupils with ALN. The school carefully identifies the support, including interventions needed to ensure that most pupils with additional learning needs make at least expected progress from their individual starting points. Staff work closely with external agencies to enhance the support provided.

Staff encourage pupils, including those with ALN, to become involved in a variety of worthwhile pupil leadership groups. Year 6 pupils also take on responsibilities around the school and act as positive role models for younger pupils. For example, helping at lunchtime and as reading buddies. Pupils are regularly involved in making decisions that improve their experience of school, including discussions with teachers about what and how they learn. The school provides opportunities to ensure all pupils have a wider understanding of the world they live in.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development suitably and allows pupils time for reflection. As a result, most pupils have a clear understanding of fairness, equity and inclusion in their daily lives. The Rights Respecting School council visit community events at the village hall to improve opportunities for people in the area and this enables pupils to talk about their rights knowledgably. The school is beginning to develop pupils' awareness of diversity and inclusivity appropriately. For example, pupils learn about equality through workshops focussed on racism.

The school has robust systems in place to safeguard pupils and staff appropriately. Staff promote daily attendance at school effectively and work closely with families and agencies to ensure pupils attend school regularly.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides highly effective, compassionate leadership. She has established a culture of trust, teamwork, and a drive for continuous improvement across the school. Along with senior leaders she has established a clear and shared vision for the school, based on meeting the needs of all pupils and aiming for high levels of well-being and strong pupil progress. Leaders place a clear emphasis on pupils' well-being, and as a result the school has a strong culture of safeguarding.

Leaders engage purposefully with families and listen carefully to their views and contributions. Parents appreciate opportunities to influence the school's curriculum and develop a good understanding of their child's learning.

Senior leaders work closely with staff to identify accurate school improvement priorities through a rigorous and effective cycle of self-evaluation. The school takes good account of national priorities as well as developments that are specific to the school. For example, the school is working with Bangor University on developing an outdoor adventurous learning curriculum.

Leaders recognise the vital role that high-quality teaching and assessment plays in sustaining and improving the quality of learning. Leaders collaborate productively with local schools and those further afield to provide a wealth of professional learning. This work is integral to the school's ongoing improvement journey and enables staff to learn with and from one another. Leaders encourage staff to enhance their personal learning and interests and engage in research projects based on school priorities and take on roles of leadership.

The school's governing body brings together members from a broad range of backgrounds with an exceptionally useful set of skills. Governors understand their statutory responsibilities well, including their role in embedding a positive safeguarding culture and promoting healthy eating and drinking. They act appropriately as a critical friend through their work, for example, reviewing pupils' progress across the school. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's work, gathered from the headteacher's detailed reports, visits to the school, and informative presentations from teachers and pupil leadership groups.

Governors and leaders manage the school's finances well to support school improvement. They have recently allocated funding to improve the outdoor learning environment to enable teachers to offer a wider range of authentic experiences for pupils. The school uses sports grant funding effectively to provide beneficial activities for pupils. Pupils worked with school leaders to select equipment designed to develop health and well-being provision in the outdoors.

Leaders show a keen awareness of the financial pressures on families and ensure that all pupils engage with learning opportunities such as trips and music tuition.

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)

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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