A report on

**Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary School
Cefn Lane
Glyncoch
Pontypridd
CF37 3BP**

Date of inspection: September 2018

by

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

About Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary School

Craig Yr Hesg Primary School is in Glyncoch, north of Pontypridd in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. There are 156 pupils on roll, including 26 full-time nursery pupils. There are six mixed-year classes and one single-year class.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is 37%. This is well above the average for Wales of 18%. The school identifies 46% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is much higher than the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are in the care of the local authority. Most pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school formed a federation with Cefn Primary School in September 2012. The current executive headteacher for the federation and the head of school for Craig Yr Hesg Primary School took up their posts in January 2014. The school's previous inspection was in March 2011.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to education reform in Wales.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

Summary

The school is an inclusive community with a caring team of staff, who support pupils' wellbeing successfully. The head of school manages the day-to-day running of the school effectively. Pupils feel safe and valued and they enjoy coming to school. Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

As they move through the school, many pupils become capable mathematicians who enjoy solving problems. They develop effective speaking and listening skills, often from low starting points, and they make steady progress with their reading. However, across the school, many pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped.

School leaders have an inspiring vision to develop the federation as a professional learning community. However, its management processes are not strong enough to ensure that all aspects of its provision are effective. Instability in staffing and leadership over the past few years has contributed to too much variability in the quality of teaching at Craig Yr Hesg. As a result, pupils do not always have enough purposeful opportunities to develop their skills successfully. Overall, the arrangement for setting pupils across classes in key stage 2 do not help less able pupils to make good enough progress in their learning.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Adequate and needs improvement**

Recommendations

R1 Establish stable and effective leadership and teaching teams

R2 Improve monitoring and school improvement processes to ensure they focus on raising standards for pupils

R3 Improve the quality of teaching and ensure any grouping arrangements across classes enable pupils of all abilities to make effective progress

R4 Raise standards in writing

R5 Ensure all teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

When they start school in the nursery class, most pupils have weak speaking skills and a majority have listening skills that are below the level expected for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils make satisfactory or better progress from their starting points, especially in mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils who are more able achieve good standards. However, across the school, less able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

Many pupils' oral skills develop well in the foundation phase. In reception, a few more able pupils speak confidently and clearly, for example when they explain the rules of a Welsh language game ('Beth sy yn y bocs?') to other children. By Year 2, many pupils listen well. They develop their vocabulary and provide relevant details when talking to adults and each other. They contribute successfully to small group discussions and take turns to speak, for example when describing the strategies they use to solve a mathematical problem. As they progress through key stage 2, many pupils express their views thoughtfully. They build well on other pupils' responses during a class discussion of the impact of rainforest deforestation on orang-utans. However, a few less able pupils struggle to communicate their ideas coherently and they make grammatical errors in their speech.

In the foundation phase, many pupils make suitable progress in developing their early reading skills. By Year 2, many pupils use a variety of strategies to read unfamiliar words and use picture clues to support their understanding of events in a story. More able pupils read a suitable range of texts fluently, accurately and with lively expression. However, a few pupils have weak knowledge of phonics and this hinders their progress in reading. In key stage 2, many pupils read texts independently with concentration. They show a sound understanding of the main ideas in stories and infer characters' emotions successfully, for example when viewing an animated poem. In Year 6, more able pupils skim and scan for information efficiently. They synthesise their notes from reading effectively, for example to create interesting reports about the Second World War.

A majority of pupils in the reception class form recognisable letters and many progress solidly to writing a simple sentence. In Year 2, many pupils write for an appropriate range of purposes. A few pupils show good awareness of audience when writing a diary entry in the role of 'Jack' after climbing the beanstalk. They begin to add humour to their writing, for example commenting, 'I shouldn't have done that!' However, a majority of pupils in the foundation phase do not progress quickly enough from writing words phonetically to spelling correctly. In key stage 2, many pupils build appropriately on their writing skills. By Year 6, they use a range of punctuation accurately, for example brackets to add information. More able pupils engage the reader successfully by making good use of metaphor and personification in their descriptive writing. However, across the school, pupils' ability to express their ideas independently and for a wide range of purposes through extended writing opportunities is limited. The quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work varies too much across the school.

Many foundation phase pupils enjoy learning Welsh and they take part enthusiastically in songs and activities. By Year 2, many pupils ask and answer a range of questions competently, including using the past tense. More able pupils sustain a conversation happily and extend their responses when talking about their families and hobbies. However, in key stage 2, pupils' oracy skills are less well developed and many pupils lack confidence when answering questions.

Many pupils in the foundation phase develop a strong grasp of mathematical skills and a few achieve very highly. They make rapid progress in their understanding of place value and work confidently with numbers above a thousand. Many Year 2 pupils use advanced mathematical language precisely, such as 'digit', 'partitioning', 'vertices' and 'equilateral triangle', when they describe how they solve problems. In key stage 2, most pupils build upon these strong foundations well and enjoy mathematical challenges. By Year 6, many pupils are capable mathematicians who develop effective higher-order thinking skills. They read information carefully, apply their reasoning skills to solve problems successfully and use a range of efficient methods. For instance, they work out they need to calculate the range and median of sets of data to draw conclusions about a swimmer's progress when preparing to compete in the Olympics. However, in a majority of classes, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum well enough.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop strong skills in ICT across a wide range of areas of learning. For example, with help from Year 6 pupils, reception pupils send emails to Father Christmas. They make recordings of the method for making bread rolls and create a 'quick response' code so other pupils can scan the code to follow their instructions and provide feedback. In key stage 2, many pupils make suitable progress with their ICT skills. For example, they produce appropriate presentations and create records for a database of world leaders linked to their topic work. A minority of older pupils use a formula successfully in their spreadsheets, for instance to calculate how many pupils use different social networking sites, when discussing how to stay safe online.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Nearly all pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued. They are happy and enjoy coming to school. They appreciate how adults help them, for example when they have a problem. They know where they can access support and they benefit from visiting a quiet space or having time to talk to someone. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Older pupils have researched how widely children use social media. As a result, they have created a 'keep safe guide' for pupils. This provides important information on age restrictions and the dangers of online communication and gives pupils appropriate advice about what to do if they feel concerned when using the internet.

Most pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy by making sensible choices about what to eat and drink. They recognise the benefits of regular exercise and they enjoy participating in the 'daily mile'. However, pupils do not enhance their wellbeing through extra-curricular activities during lunchtimes and after school.

Across the school, many pupils take on a range of leadership roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. For example, the 'Criw Cymraeg' develops

playground games to encourage pupils to use the Welsh language during playtimes. The school council produces newsletters to inform parents of their work, for instance in supporting charities, such as the local food bank. This involvement with the community helps pupils to develop empathy and a better understanding of others' needs within their locality.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They settle to their tasks quickly and they display good self-organisational skills. In a few classes, pupils show they are able to work flexibly, for example taking different roles in a collaborative task successfully and swapping roles part of the way through a literacy activity. A very few more able pupils take a lead in learning. For example, they propose which strategy their class could use for a group task and they give reasons to support why they think a particular approach would be useful. However, in general, too many pupils across the school do not develop their independent learning skills well enough. A minority struggle to persevere to complete tasks and they lose interest in their work too quickly.

Most pupils behave well around the school. They are polite and eager to please. However, a few pupils do not behave appropriately in lessons and they disrupt the learning of others.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Teachers plan collaboratively across the federation and this helps them to establish common principles for teaching and learning, which relate to the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales. All teachers in the school recognise the value of reflecting on their teaching practices and they are willing to try out new approaches to support pupils' learning more effectively. Many teachers plan relevant experiences for pupils with clear objectives for their learning.

Across the school, most staff develop effective professional relationships with pupils and many have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most teachers use support staff appropriately to support pupils' learning. In a majority of classes, where teaching is consistently strong, teachers create a positive culture for learning, which challenges most pupils and fosters their resilience as learners. In these classes, they use an effective range of teaching approaches, such as interesting and stimulating 'hooks' to engage pupils. For example, in the foundation phase, teachers use artefacts successfully to entice pupils into guessing which fairy tale they will be reading that day.

Many staff have strong subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to progress pupils' learning. A few teachers focus skilfully on helping pupils to acquire the language necessary to collaborate effectively with others and to explain their learning. As a result, they develop classroom interactions between pupils of high quality to extend their thinking. However, a minority of teachers do not match tasks well enough to pupils' individual needs, particularly for those pupils who are less able. In these classes, teachers often pitch the learning at too high a level. As a result, pupils become disengaged, restless and over-reliant on adult support. The school's current arrangements for setting pupils across classes in key stage 2 do not meet their individual needs sufficiently, particularly the needs of less able pupils.

The majority of teachers give pupils helpful verbal feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, too often pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of the written feedback in their books and teachers do not always follow up on this to ensure pupils make improvements to their work. As a result, pupils' ability to move their own learning forward varies too much. Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment varies too much from class to class and, as a result, a minority of pupils make limited progress in their learning.

The school has incorporated the literacy and numeracy framework suitably into its plans and is beginning to consider the digital competence framework appropriately. However, in general, teachers do not plan enough opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across a broad range of tasks across the curriculum. Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to write independently at length. In a minority of classes, an over-reliance on worksheets, particularly in pupils' topic books, means that pupils do not have enough opportunity to express their ideas freely and independently.

In most classes in the foundation phase, staff encourage pupils to make their own choices about what they want to learn. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 organise a banquet for parents. They produce invitations, and make sandwiches and drinks for the event. This helps these younger pupils to develop their independent learning skills well. However, in general, many pupils across the school do not have enough opportunities to lead their own learning.

The school provides a beneficial range of activities that promote Welsh history, culture and the local environment, for example through the annual Eisteddfod and the study of the area's coal mining heritage. There are a few visits to places of interest, such as Llancaich Fawr, and older pupils enjoy a residential stay at the Urdd in Cardiff. A few older pupils visit Oxford University and this helps to raise their aspirations of studying at world-leading universities.

Across the school, there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. However, in key stage 2, the majority of teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to consolidate their learning and to build effectively upon their prior knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not retain or understand basic language patterns well enough.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is an inclusive, caring and supportive ethos in the school. Staff give all pupils highly valued opportunities to share their experiences and feelings in an environment where they feel comfortable appreciated. This helps many pupils with social and emotional needs to overcome barriers to their learning and to develop greater resilience when they face challenges in their lives. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school forges strong relationships with parents and carers. It uses a wide range of communication channels, such as newsletters, text messages, the school website and social media, to provide useful information about day-to-day matters and the school's activities. Pupils share examples of their work with their families through an

online application and staff talk with parents regularly about their children's progress and wellbeing. Parents value the warm welcome they receive at the school and this enables them to raise any concerns they have.

There is an appropriate system for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils as they move through the school. Many staff use the information from the tracking system suitably to plan appropriate next steps for most pupils' learning and to identify pupils who require extra support. Leaders use an additional learning needs 'toolkit' effectively to select which interventions are most appropriate to meet pupils' identified needs. They ensure that trained staff provide effective support to those identified. Recently, the school has taken steps to improve the quality of pupils' individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs to ensure they include specific targets against which to measure pupils' progress. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

There are many pupil-led groups which support the work of the school appropriately. For example, the 'eco warriors' are proactive in ensuring that classes recycle waste effectively and that the school reduces the amount of energy it uses. However, there are no opportunities for pupils to enrich their sporting or cultural interests further through the provision of lunchtime or after-school clubs. The school has effective arrangements to support the successful transition of pupils between classes and to the secondary school. For example, Year 6 pupils participate in a joint cluster project with the local high school and other primary schools to perform the musical, 'Matilda'. In addition, the school plans its own worthwhile opportunities to help pupils engage with cultural activities and the creative arts. For example, key stage 2 classes take part in an ambitious project to create their own Christmas production. A musician visits the school regularly to work with pupils to compose their own music and to help them write and perform dramatic pieces. As a result, pupils' singing, performance and creative skills develop well and this helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

All staff support pupils in developing positive attitudes to difference and diversity effectively. The curriculum ensures that pupils discuss the importance of racial and religious tolerance in the context of the wider world. As a result, most pupils have a sound understanding of equality issues and their responsibilities as global citizens. Collective worship provides pupils with purposeful opportunities to reflect on their actions and to consider how these affect others. However, assemblies do not always develop pupils' spiritual awareness strongly enough.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The executive headteacher, together with the heads of the two schools, have established a clear vision for the federation that focuses appropriately on meeting the wellbeing and educational needs of pupils and developing the professional learning of staff. They have communicated this vision successfully among staff and governors. The executive headteacher leads on strategic matters across the federation and the heads of the two schools lead at an operational level in each school. At Craig Yr Hesg, the head of school provides effective day-to-day management of the school. For example, she acts swiftly to resolve any concerns which parents raise. Members of staff generally have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, over the last year, the federation has faced a challenging period in terms of staff absence, and this has contributed to less effective leadership practices.

Governors are supportive of the work of the federation, and have high aspirations for making it a flagship learning institution. Governors have link roles to monitor the four priority areas for improvement within the federation's development plan. They visit the two schools regularly and undertake joint observations with staff. As a result, they have an increasing understanding of many of the school's strengths and a few of its areas for development. However, governors' roles in challenging leaders about pupil progress over time is limited.

The federation has developed a clear structure for improvement planning, based on four priority areas and leaders develop detailed action plans to support them in achieving their targets. These action plans form the basis of the school improvement plan and set out appropriately the staff responsible, a sensible timeline, key evidence, resource implications and the name of the link governor. However, the success criteria generally focus too much on leadership and provision, rather than on pupil outcomes.

Leaders have created a strong culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff. For example, the training provided to support staff in using strategies to develop pupils' emotional wellbeing and their reading skills have proved effective in building pupils' self-confidence and improving their work. There are suitable arrangements to support the active engagement of all staff in increasing their professional knowledge, understanding and skills, based on action research. However, many of the strategies leaders encourage focus too heavily on high-level research without enough evaluation of their impact on pupils' outcomes and wellbeing within the federation.

During the last few years, a significant number of key members of staff have undertaken secondments or been released from the school for variable periods in order to support other schools and initial teacher education programmes. Leaders have not always considered the impact of this on the remaining staff and pupils, particularly at times when there are staffing issues within the school. This instability across the federation during the last academic year has also tended to undermine the school's ability to maintain high standards and provision that is consistently good or better. Current processes for monitoring progress are too complex and do not inform improvement action plans well enough.

Leaders manage the school's resources effectively and spending decisions support the school's targets for improvement appropriately. Recently, leaders and governors have reviewed the skills and experience of staff across the federation. As a result, leaders have moved staff between the two schools to strengthen the quality of teaching and middle leadership of the federation as a whole. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. In general, leaders make suitable use of the pupil development grant to support vulnerable pupils appropriately.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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