



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

**Croesyceiliog School
Woodland Road
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2YB**

Date of inspection: March 2011

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:

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

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

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Context

Croesyceiliog School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in Cwmbran in Torfaen County Borough Council. There are currently 1,561 learners on roll, including 260 in the sixth form. Most learners come from Croesyceiliog, Llanyrafon, Maendy and Pontnewydd, districts of the town of Cwmbran. However, a significant number apply from outside the catchment area and travel some distance to the school.

In the current academic year, 13.5% of learners are entitled to free school meals, which is below the Welsh average of 17.1% for secondary schools. A total of 15% of learners are on the school's special educational needs register. This figure is below the national figure of 16.9% for secondary schools. The percentage of learners with a statement of special educational needs is 1%, compared with 2.7% for Wales as a whole.

Around 5% of the school's learners are from a minority-ethnic or mixed-race background. About 1% of learners are from Welsh-speaking homes, or speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard.

The current headteacher has been in post since September 2009. Since then, the school has appointed one new deputy headteacher and has restructured the responsibilities of members of the senior leadership team.

The school motto is 'Learning, Tolerance, Ambition'. It aims to:

- support and challenge young people to become independent learners;
- create a sense of community so that each member of the school feels valued and supported; and
- provide an environment in which every member of the school community can thrive and embrace the values of learning, tolerance and ambition.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per learner for Croesyceiliog School is £3,701, which compares with a maximum of £4,454 and a minimum of £3,701 for secondary schools in Torfaen. The school has the lowest budget per learner of the seven secondary schools in Torfaen.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

There are many good features of the school's work. These include:

- learners' attainment in a majority of performance indicators;
- very few learners leaving school with no qualifications;
- the good progress most learners make in the majority of lessons;
- a broad and balanced curriculum that enables learners to receive a good range of learning experiences and obtain relevant qualifications;
- well-planned and effective teaching in the large majority of lessons; and
- the high level of care and support that contributes effectively to learners' outcomes and wellbeing and to the development of their personal and social skills.

However, current performance is judged as adequate overall because:

- performance in a few key indicators, including the core subject indicator at key stage 3, has not shown sustained improvement;
- there has been relative underperformance in science, particularly at key stage 4;
- differences between the performances of boys and girls in several indicators at key stages 3 and 4 are significantly larger than Wales and family averages;
- attendance has been adequate when compared to that of similar schools; and
- learners do not make enough progress in a minority of lessons where teaching does not challenge them fully.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because of the:

- clear and well-targeted strategic direction to the school's work;
- effective management systems and structures;
- systematic and comprehensive self-evaluation arrangements;
- realistic and accurate identification of the school's strengths and areas for improvement;
- clear and appropriate improvement objectives that are supported by detailed plans; and
- established partnerships that contribute well to improving learner outcomes and wellbeing.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Croesyceiliog School need to:

- R1 take steps to raise standards in science and other areas where there is relative under-performance;
- R2 develop a more co-ordinated approach to improving the performance of identified groups of learners including boys;
- R3 continue to develop strategies to improve attendance;
- R4 promote the development of learners' skills more consistently across the curriculum; and
- R5 improve the quality of teaching to engage and increase the level of challenge for all pupils.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by Estyn.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

At key stage 3, the percentage of learners attaining the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) in 2010 was slightly below both national and family averages. In the last four years, there has been a significant fall in the proportion of learners attaining this indicator.

Key stage 3 learners generally attain well in English and mathematics. The percentages of learners attaining level 5 or above in English and mathematics were above family averages in 2010. In English, this percentage has been consistently above the family average over the last four years. The percentage of learners attaining level 5 or above in science fell sharply in 2010 and was below the family average for the first time in three years.

At key stage 4, the percentage of learners attaining the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has been broadly in line with family averages over the last three years. The percentage of learners attaining the level 1 threshold has been consistently above family averages. The wider points score (comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 16) and the percentage of learners attaining the level 2 threshold have been below family averages for the last three years.

When compared to similar schools based on the percentage of learners entitled to free school meals, the school has been above the median for the percentage of learners attaining level 2 in English and mathematics in each of the last three years. In science, the percentage of learners attaining level 2 has been below the median in each of the last three years.

The percentage of post-16 learners attaining the level 3 threshold has been broadly in line with the national average in recent years. In 2010, this percentage fell significantly and was below the national average. Attainment on the wider points score has improved at a slower rate than nationally over recent years and was below the Wales average in 2010.

In 2010, the difference between the percentage of boys and girls attaining the core subject indicator at key stage 3 and the level 2 threshold and the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics at key stage 4 was larger than both national and family averages.

Learners with special educational needs make generally good progress in relation to their ability. At key stage 4, the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with family averages. However, the percentage of key stage 3 learners entitled to free school meals attaining the core subject indicator has fallen at a faster rate than that of other learners.

In three of the last four years, no learners left school without a qualification. At the end of Year 11, about 78% of learners remained in full-time education. This is in line with local but below national averages. The proportion of Year 11 learners who left the school in summer 2010 not in education, training or employment is better than local and national averages. About 63% go on to higher education after the sixth form.

In the majority of lessons, learners make good progress. Many learners apply their knowledge well, for example to solve problems or appreciate new concepts. However, in a minority of lessons, learners do not acquire a sufficiently secure understanding of new topics or develop their skills well enough.

Most learners listen attentively but a few do not listen carefully enough to teachers' explanations or the opinions of others. Many learners make thoughtful and constructive contributions to group or class discussions. More able learners express their views confidently.

Most learners extract and interpret information effectively from texts. Many write well for a range of purposes with more able learners producing balanced and reasoned analyses. A minority of learners of all abilities make spelling and basic grammatical errors.

Most learners who receive targeted catch-up support in literacy and numeracy make good progress. However, learners at both key stages 3 and 4 do not develop their extended writing, mathematical, and information and communication technology skills consistently across the curriculum.

The percentage of learners attaining level 5 or above in Welsh second language has improved steadily over the last four years and been consistently above family and Wales averages.

In the last two years, the majority of Year 11 learners gained level 2 in the Welsh second language full course. Compared with schools in similar areas this is a good performance. However, about half of learners did not make expected progress based on earlier performance at key stage 2. A minority of current key stage 4 learners have negative attitudes to learning Welsh and are making very slow progress.

There has been good take up of Welsh at A level.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners feel safe and confident within the school. The majority are well motivated and behave well. However, in a minority of lessons, a few learners are not fully engaged and disrupt the learning of others. There are very few incidents of bullying. Secure working relationships and an ethos of trust exist between learners and staff.

Attendance has been adequate over the last three years. It is improving steadily as a result of a range of strategies. Identified learners have benefited from targeted

support to raise self-esteem, improve anger management and address attendance issues.

Most learners understand what it is to be healthy. They choose healthy options in the school canteen and are physically active within and outside of the curriculum.

Learners across the school are well consulted on issues related to many aspects of school life. They have good opportunities to influence the school's work.

Most learners' social and life skills are developing well. Learners have benefited from involvement in a range of community projects and charity fund-raising events. The Tenovus group, which raises funds and provides peer support for learners affected by cancer, is a particularly good initiative. Many older students volunteer as reading buddies for learners in Years 7 and 8 or as tutors on the school's reading catch-up programme. Some train as sports leaders and others provide helpful support to tutor groups throughout the school.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It enables learners to receive a good range of learning experiences and obtain relevant qualifications. The key stage 3 curriculum builds well on key stage 2 learning experiences in cluster primary schools.

The school meets the needs of key stage 4 and post-16 learners well. In collaboration with other providers, it offers a good range of vocational and academic courses. The school meets the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. Links with local employers provide good access to work-focused experiences.

There is an appropriately flexible curriculum for a small group of vulnerable learners at key stage 4. This is helping to improve the attendance of these learners. Additional accredited courses extend successfully the learning of more able and talented learners.

The Welsh Baccalaureate has enriched and widened provision for all post-16 learners, extending opportunities for learners to improve their skills.

Opportunities for learners in key stages 3 and 4 to develop their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills are limited in a minority of subjects.

The good variety of well-attended extra-curricular activities contributes substantially to learners' progress and the development of their personal and social skills.

Curriculum provision for Welsh at both key stages 3 and 4 is good with all key stage 4 learners following either the full or short-course GCSE. The school contributes well to learners' wider knowledge and understanding of Wales. However, the use of incidental Welsh across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Initiatives to promote sustainable development are at an early stage although the Eco committee is providing useful impetus to this work. The school increasingly contributes to learners' awareness of global citizenship through work in several subjects and as part of its personal and social education programme.

Teaching: Adequate

The majority of lessons include clear learning objectives. In these lessons, teachers plan a range of activities, which challenge and engage learners, and help them make good progress. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils and good use of praise and encouragement. Many lessons include interesting starter activities and effective plenary sessions.

In a few lessons, where teaching is particularly effective, learners have very good opportunities to develop their communication, thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners' needs are met particularly well and they make very good progress.

In a minority of lessons, a lack of pace and challenge results in learners not making sufficient progress. They are not all engaged in their learning and this leads to occasional low-level disruption. In these lessons, there are not enough opportunities for learners to work independently and develop their problem-solving skills.

Teachers mark learners' work regularly. In the majority of cases, comments are informative and offer helpful suggestions to improve. However, the quality of marking varies considerably. A minority of teachers do not give enough guidance on how to improve. There is not always sufficient follow up to ensure that learners take note of the comments and improve their work.

There is an increasing focus on the use of assessment for learning strategies. Most learners know their specific targets and understand what they need to do to achieve them. In a few departments, peer and self-assessment is developing well.

Subject leaders make good use of progress data to identify underachievement at key stage 4 and at post-16. As a result, appropriate intervention strategies are implemented for individual learners.

Reports to parents are informative. They identify strengths and indicate what learners need to do to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school supports and cares for learners well. Provision for personal and social education, and for supporting learners' health and wellbeing, is good. There are effective arrangements that help Year 7 learners settle well. The school identifies learners' needs when they join and ensures that these needs are met appropriately.

Targeted support for particular small groups of learners across the school has resulted in significant improvement in their reading and numeracy skills. These interventions have also led to improved confidence, attendance and behaviour.

These initiatives are having a very positive impact on improving access to the curriculum for a minority of learners.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding and responds effectively to concerns regarding learners' wellbeing. It promotes learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully and engages well with a wide range of outside agencies. Assemblies provide useful opportunities for reflection.

Parents and learners receive detailed advice and helpful support, for example when making option choices or considering future careers. There is good learning-coach support for post-16 learners.

Most learners with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and make good progress. However, a few learners do not get the specific support they require to help them progress in a minority of their lessons. The annual review process for learners with special educational needs satisfies statutory requirements and the school works effectively, in partnership with specialist services, to meet the needs of these learners. Parents of these learners are well informed and encouraged to be fully involved with their children's education.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and caring community with an ethos of mutual respect and tolerance. It places particular emphasis on helping others, for example through charity fundraising. In all aspects of its work, the school recognises and respects diversity and sets out to address the needs of learners appropriately. It offers equal access to all areas of the curriculum and encourages learners to challenge stereotypes in their expectations, achievements and subject choices. The school makes appropriate arrangements to adapt provision for learners with disabilities, within the physical constraints of the site.

The fabric of many of the buildings on the site is adequate. However, the premises are well maintained and there has been significant investment in providing new accommodation, such as the music facilities and fitness suite and in enhancing the general environment. The school provides a welcoming and often stimulating learning environment which is improved by many high-quality displays. Outdoor facilities for physical education are particularly good. Learning resources across the school are appropriate to meet learners' needs.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher, well supported by the senior leadership team, gives clear and effective strategic direction to the school's work and future development. She has restructured the roles of the senior leadership team to give greater focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. This approach has involved re-distributing, and delegating operational responsibilities more widely.

Senior leaders are effective in carrying out their responsibilities and provide good support for other staff. They monitor all aspects of the school's work carefully and contribute effectively to establishing a strong learning culture. 'Walkabout' days, where members of the senior leadership team patrol the buildings and drop in on classes, are particularly helpful. These arrangements enable senior leaders to provide valuable support for staff and to identify issues that may need more focused attention. While these arrangements and expectations are having a positive influence on the school's work, it is too early for the impact to be evident in all performance outcomes.

Many middle managers have a clear understanding of their roles and carry them out well. A few managers have not made the necessary improvements in their areas.

Management systems and structures are effective. Regular meetings focus appropriately on core business and ensure that there is broad discussion of priorities. Senior staff communicate their expectations, for example about policies and procedures, clearly. Middle managers value the half-termly meetings with their link manager in the senior leadership team. These meetings allow senior leaders to monitor progress, while providing the necessary support and challenge in identifying and achieving agreed targets.

The governing body's committee structure is well organised and governors are very well informed about the performance of the school. They have a good grasp of a range of performance data. They work well with the headteacher to agree development strategies and monitor the school's progress towards its targets. Governors are effective in their roles as critical friends.

The school works well to address national priorities such as Learning Pathways, healthy living and extending partnership work with primary schools.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation is an integral part of the school's working life. Systems are thorough and evaluations draw on a wide range of evidence. This evidence includes a large number of lesson observations by senior managers, for example as part of departmental reviews or performance management arrangements. Several departments have produced useful reports based on the findings of peer observations.

Self-evaluation arrangements place considerable emphasis on scrutiny of learners' work and the views of learners and parents. Managers at all levels make increasing and effective use of data in order to identify strengths and shortcomings, and set targets for improvement. As a result, senior leaders know the school very well, and middle managers are increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve their areas of responsibility. However, it is too early for the impact of these arrangements to be apparent in all performance indicators.

Many annual departmental self-evaluations are comprehensive. They are generally of good quality, though in a minority of cases they do not fully recognise shortcomings, for example in the quality of teaching. The whole-school

self-evaluation report is a detailed and realistic document. It indicates most areas that require improvement but does not recognise a few issues identified in the current inspection.

The link between self-evaluation and development planning is well established. Departmental and pastoral improvement plans and the school improvement plan derive appropriately from the findings of self-evaluation. The school improvement plan is an effective tool and sets out clear and appropriate priorities. Department plans provide a good basis for action, with challenging targets and success criteria.

Groups of teachers work well together to drive specific initiatives. The Learning Group, for example, has worked effectively on a range of projects to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Another group of teachers has developed a classroom handbook to promote best practice. A few teachers also contribute to specific learning communities organised by the local authority that, for example, focus on middle leadership and innovative teaching approaches.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies, organisations and other providers. These partnerships contribute well to improving learning experiences and to the quality of care, support and guidance for learners.

The school liaises well with partner primary schools to enable learners to make a smooth transition from Year 6 and to settle quickly into Year 7. A strong feature of transition arrangements is the innovative use of video conferencing to link Year 7 learners with those in Year 6. This allows Year 6 learners to see the school and to ask informed questions of peers before making formal visits.

Learners aged 14 to 19 have access to a wide range of vocational courses at levels 1 and 2 through the school's active involvement in the 14-19 network. Provision is mapped well across a number of institutions to ensure courses are offered at suitable locations. The school has adapted timetables appropriately to make best use of available time and to provide cost-effective additional courses.

The school takes suitable action to monitor the quality and effectiveness of partnership provision within the 14-19 network. It works well with other providers to improve learner outcomes and wellbeing.

Resource management: Adequate

There are well-designed procedures to plan for future development and to ensure funding is allocated appropriately to clearly-identified priorities. The school has made significant improvements to the quality of accommodation and resources. There are good procedures to minimise wastage in the use of resources. Senior leaders have been active in securing additional funds to introduce new courses while collaborative arrangements have helped extend curriculum choices and improve efficiency in the allocation of resources.

The school has sufficient teaching staff that are deployed appropriately. Senior managers identify teachers' professional development needs through performance-management arrangements and departmental reviews. In-service training is organised systematically and economically, through increasing emphasis on peer support, to reflect whole-school and department priorities.

The school manages its resources well. However, since the standards learners achieve are adequate and there has not been a consistent pattern of improvement in recent years, overall the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 35 responses to the parent questionnaire representing a relatively small proportion of the total number of parents. Of those that responded, many parents gave a positive or very positive response to many questions.

Many parents are satisfied with the school. They state that it is well run and that their children are safe and like the school. Most parents indicate that their children were helped to settle in well when they started school. Many consider there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and that their children are encouraged to be healthy. They feel very comfortable about approaching the school to discuss matters about their child's education and wellbeing.

Most parents believe that their children are making good progress. They consider staff expectations to be good and that homework reinforces learning. Many indicate that teaching is good and that staff support their children well. They feel that their children are well prepared for moving on to the next school or college.

The large majority of parents feel well informed about their children's progress and believe that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. However, a significant minority express concerns about learners' behaviour.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 395 learners, selected at random from across the age range. Most learners state that they feel safe in school. Many indicate that they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns and believe that the school deals well with bullying.

Most learners consider that they are doing well and that staff help them to learn and make progress and encourage them to take responsibility. Many believe that they have enough books and equipment and the large majority consider that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. Most feel well prepared for further education or employment.

Many learners state that the school teaches them to be healthy and most indicate that there are plenty of opportunities to get regular exercise.

Most learners confirm that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds. Many indicate that staff treat them fairly and with respect. About half of all learners feel the school takes account of their views, although post-16 learners feel less well consulted.

About half of all learners, and the majority of key stage 3 learners, express concerns about behaviour.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

John Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Steffan James	Team Inspector
Meinir Rees	Team Inspector
Janet Waldron	Team Inspector
Gill Sims	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Liz York	Peer Inspector
Tyrone Davies	School Nominee

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Year groups 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 LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	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 four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	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