



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

**A report on**

**Caldicot School  
Mill Lane  
Caldicot  
Monmouthshire  
NP26 5XA**

**Date of inspection: October 2018**

**by**

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

## About Caldicot School

Caldicot School is an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school, serving the town and the surrounding area, and maintained by Monmouthshire County Council. Currently the school has 1,312 pupils, including 170 in the sixth form, which is a slight increase from the 1,293 at the time of the last inspection in November 2013.

Around 9.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the Welsh average of 16.4% for secondary schools. Less than 1% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

About 20% of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register. The school has a local authority Special Needs Resource Base for children with moderate to severe learning needs. It accommodates up to 55 pupils across the 11-18 age range, with approximately 10 new pupils in Year 7 joining every September. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is 4.4% compared with the average of 2.2% for the whole of Wales. Very few pupils are from a minority-ethnic or mixed-race background. Very few pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

The acting headteacher took up his post in April 2018. The interim senior leadership team consists of the acting headteacher, a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, a director of teaching, a corporate wellbeing manager and the business manager. There is an extended senior management group that includes three assistant directors and two pathway leaders.

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 currently has an interim senior leadership structure as a result of changes to the membership of this team. This arrangement has a suitably strong focus on improving teaching and learning. However, the temporary structure does not allow all senior leaders sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities. As a result, the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning for improving pupils' wellbeing is not rigorous enough.

Nearly all staff promote a positive ethos based on values such as honesty, tolerance, and respect. In general, teachers foster positive working relationships with pupils. In many cases, they plan and deliver their lessons well. Overall, this has led to positive outcomes for pupils over time. The special needs resource base provides a high level of sensitive and caring support to specific pupils.

Many pupils exhibit good attitudes to their work, and behave well in lessons and around the school. However, a few pupils, especially girls in key stage 4, do not engage fully with learning activities.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form
- R2 Improve pupils' attitudes to learning, especially those of girls in key stage 4
- R3 Ensure that all staff apply the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies and procedures consistently
- R4 Improve provision across the curriculum for developing pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R5 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning
- R6 Address the health and safety issues identified during this inspection

## **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: Good

During their time in school, many pupils make strong progress in their subject knowledge and understanding, and skills. In three of the last four years, outcomes for pupils in key stage 4 compare favourably with those of similar schools in many performance indicators.

In many lessons, pupils recall prior learning accurately and build on this well. They develop a clear understanding of key subject concepts and a majority are able to apply these thoughtfully in a range of different situations. For example, in science lessons pupils learn how to characterise and control different variables when planning a wide variety of investigations. In a few cases, pupils do not have a firm understanding of the concepts under discussion and make little progress.

Many pupils listen well to their teacher and their peers. These pupils discuss ideas thoughtfully and make considered responses to other pupils' points of view, for example, when discussing whether 'Bloody Mary' deserved her nickname. Many pupils have a well-developed general and specific vocabulary. A few offer sophisticated responses to teachers' questions, for example when discussing how the media sometimes manipulates images to support its own agenda. However, a few pupils do not listen well to their peers or their teacher. These pupils do not engage readily in discussions, offer underdeveloped answers and do not express their ideas clearly. Many pupils are developing very well their ability to converse in Welsh. They gain a wide vocabulary and speak with increasingly accurate pronunciation as they move through the school.

Most pupils are fluent readers and show confidence when reading aloud in lessons. They can pick out key facts from text to support their learning well. Many use a range of reading strategies competently to help them gain an overview of information in different kinds of text. Many pupils are able to analyse successfully the effect of various literary devices and evaluate their impact on the audience. A majority are developing suitably their ability to synthesise information and draw inferences.

Many pupils produce extended writing for an appropriate range of purposes and audiences across the curriculum, for example when discussing the impact of human activity on the biodiversity of the rainforest. Many express themselves clearly with a suitable degree of technical accuracy and use paragraphs appropriately to organise their ideas. However, a few pupils do not express themselves coherently and make too many spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. A few pupils' presentation is poor and this makes their writing difficult to understand. In Welsh, many pupils develop their ability to communicate in writing very well, for example when discussing the perils of the internet.

Many pupils develop their numeracy well in appropriate contexts across the curriculum. These pupils carry out a range of mental calculations competently, for example when calculating scales and proportions in their design and technology lessons. Many use formulae accurately, for example to calculate the distance of thunderstorms from an observer. These pupils plot scatter graphs precisely and are

able to select the appropriate line of best fit to show the relationship between different variables. A few pupils do not construct graphs with suitable scales. A minority of pupils use more sophisticated techniques such as 'standard form' competently, to help them deal efficiently with large numbers.

Nearly all pupils use basic ICT functions appropriately across the curriculum. In a few cases, many develop a suitable understanding of how to use more advanced features of specific software. For example, most pupils use computer aided design applications well when designing mobile phone holders in their technology lessons. However, pupils do not use more sophisticated software functions frequently enough across the curriculum to consolidate or develop their ICT skills.

Many pupils develop their creativity well, for example when composing pieces in their music lessons or creating headlines and straplines for fictitious magazines in media studies.

Between 2014 and 2017, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics and in the capped points score compared favourably with that in similar schools. However, in 2018, performance in these indicators declined and is notably below that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five A\*-A at GCSE is consistently around that in other similar schools.

In the sixth form, the school's performance is mixed. While outcomes at level 3 are consistently above those in similar schools, performance at 3A\*-A, 3A\*-C and in the average wider points score is consistently below that in other schools.

In three of the last four years, boys' and girls' performance in most performance indicators, is close to that of other boys and girls in similar schools. Since 2014, pupils eligible for free school meals perform suitably when compared with these pupils in similar schools.

Since 2014, pupils with additional learning needs generally perform suitably against their learning targets. Pupils from the school's special needs resource base make good progress from their starting points in school.

Performance in Welsh second language at level 2 is consistently strong.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement**

Many pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and well supported. However, a minority of older pupils, especially girls, are less positive about a few aspects of school life.

Most pupils arrive on time to lessons and settle quickly. Many have positive attitudes to learning and show enthusiasm for their work. They focus well, and develop suitable resilience and independence. Most pupils work well in pairs and groups to support each other's learning. Many listen carefully to their peers and challenge their ideas in a mature fashion. However, a few pupils, especially girls in key stage 4, are too passive in lessons. They show a lack of interest in learning and do not engage readily in activities such as class discussions.

Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. However, a few pupils are distracted from their work too easily. These pupils exhibit poor behaviour which disrupts their own learning and that of others. A minority of pupils express concerns about the way in which pupil movement is managed around the school.

A majority of pupils feel that the school listens and responds to their views well. They have helped inform improvements to learning experiences in a majority of subject areas. Their suggestions have also encouraged the school to extend the range of healthy food options, change lunchtime arrangements and adopt the use of an online homework planner and communication tool.

Many pupils feel the school deals well with any instances of harassment or bullying. However, a minority of older pupils, particularly girls and those in the sixth form, feel that the school does not always deal with these aspects well enough.

Many pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and the importance of diet and exercise. They benefit from participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including street dance, girls' football and mountain bike riding.

A few pupils act as school ambassadors and have been appointed as champions of the Children's Commissioner. These pupils develop their personal and social skills well through activities such as working with local primary schools and delivering presentations to local head teachers on the importance of children's rights. A few sixth form pupils take part in a worthwhile peer-mentoring scheme to support younger pupils develop their numeracy and literacy skills.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Most teachers develop a strong rapport with pupils and ensure a positive working environment. Nearly all are good language models and understand their subject well.

In many lessons, teachers plan their lessons well to capture pupils' imagination and curiosity. In these lessons, learning activities are sequenced to ensure a suitable and progressive level of challenge. Teachers conduct these lessons at a suitable pace that maintains pupils' interest and commitment to learning. Many teachers offer clear explanations of concepts and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and a majority adapt their teaching accordingly. In a majority of cases, teachers establish beneficial routines that support a calm atmosphere and encourage independent learning. For example, in Welsh lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know how to use learning resources to extend their vocabulary and develop their grasp of syntax.

Teachers and learning support staff in the school's special needs resource base know their pupils and their specific needs extremely well. They use this information skilfully to adapt their teaching to suit their needs. As a result, most pupils within this provision make good progress against their targets.

In a minority of lessons, teachers show passion for their subject. These teachers have exceptionally high expectations of pupils and plan learning activities meticulously. They create and use attractive learning resources to stimulate pupils' interest. They ensure that all of the time in the lesson is devoted to learning. As a result, pupils in these lessons make rapid progress.

In a few cases, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils. They do not plan activities carefully enough to match pupils' abilities and as a result, pupils do not make enough progress.

A majority of teachers use open questions well and follow up on these to develop and refine pupils' understanding. However, in a minority of cases, teachers ask mainly closed questions. These teachers often answer their questions themselves rather than ensuring that pupils develop their own understanding.

The impact of assessment and feedback to pupils is too variable. In many lessons, teachers offer useful verbal feedback and ensure pupils refine their work or correct their own misconceptions. In a majority of cases, teachers offer pupils helpful written feedback and additional tasks that provide opportunities for them to improve their work. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not ensure that pupils respond to their suggestions. In a majority of cases, self-assessment or peer assessment tasks are not useful.

The curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of nearly all pupils in key stage 4 and those who return to the sixth form. It offers a wide range of academic courses and a few vocational options.

The school has recently strengthened its provision for more able pupils. Transition activities for these pupils offer a high degree of challenge. For example, pupils experience a 'tri-lingual' lesson that includes identifying the similarities between Welsh, French and Spanish. In key stage 3, the mathematics and English departments offer exciting opportunities for pupils to extend their learning for example through enhanced numeracy and literacy 'masterclasses'.

The school plans well for pupils in its special needs resource base to ensure that they receive a broad and suitable range of learning experiences and qualifications.

The school plans a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Most subject areas identify appropriate activities that enable pupils to practise and develop these skills. The school is swift to identify pupils with weaker skills and provides them with a wide range of beneficial support.

A few subjects across the curriculum provide pupils with suitable opportunities to develop their ICT skills. For example, pupils use specialist software for musical composition or to design products in design technology lessons. However, planning for the progressive development of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum is at an early stage.

The school offers relevant, beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture, such as the annual eisteddfod, Welsh Ambassadors' Day and residential visits to Llangrannog and Nant Gwrtheyrn.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. This includes a Global Awareness club, a junior orchestra, 'Clwb Cymraeg' and a variety of sporting activities. In addition, there is a substantial number of local and foreign visits, for example to the Royal Mint in Llantrisant and to le *Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire* (CERN) in Switzerland, that support pupils' learning and personal development well.



The school is a professional learning pioneer school, and contributes appropriately to the development of the new curriculum for Wales.

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

Overall, the school has an inclusive and caring ethos. Many aspects of the school's provision for care, support and guidance support pupils' wellbeing appropriately.

The school has developed an appropriate tracking system to monitor the academic progress of individual and groups of pupils across all key stages. Between 2014 and 2017, this system and subsequent planning for support was successful in securing positive outcomes for pupils. However, the school did not foresee the dip in performance in key stage 4 in most indicators in 2018. In many cases, staff use information from the tracking system suitably to identify pupils who require additional support. However, in a few cases, the school does not use the information it gathers on pupils' wellbeing well enough to address their academic and pastoral needs.

Pastoral staff use a wide range of successful strategies, including engaging with parents and outside agencies to address absenteeism. The school has clear procedures for tracking and monitoring behaviour. Many teachers apply the behaviour management system effectively and the school has trained staff usefully in approaches designed to maintain positive relationships. However, a few teachers do not deal effectively with instances of poor behaviour. Staff do not always ensure that pupils move safely around certain areas of the school.

The special needs resource base provides a high level of sensitive and caring support allowing these pupils to integrate successfully into school life. This is a notable strength. The special needs resource base council has organised charity events, half-termly assemblies and championed issues on equality. This helps pupils to develop their confidence, to feel safe and to achieve strong outcomes.

The school collaborates well with a wide range of external agencies to help address specific pupils' educational needs, and provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils with additional learning needs within mainstream also receive valuable and well-co-ordinated support, for example through worthwhile small group literacy and numeracy interventions. Leaders provide staff with appropriate resources and training to help them support these pupils. Individual plans contain relevant, short term objectives to address literacy, numeracy or behaviour and social needs. However, individual plans do not contain information on the pupil's learning needs or the teaching strategies staff could use to support their needs. As a result, these plans do not have enough information to help teachers meet the needs of all pupils. Although the school is meeting its statutory obligation for an annual review, overall, the recording of each pupil's progress towards their targets lacks sufficient detail.

The school encourages pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and promotes physical activity well. There is a wide range of beneficial opportunities for pupils to exercise outside of physical education lessons, including weight training, "boxercise" and circuit clubs. The school also provides a wide array of cultural activities which includes a drama and chess club. The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development suitably. There is an appropriate programme of personal and social education. In addition, assemblies, registration periods and religious education lessons provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to discuss a range of moral issues and to celebrate diversity and equality. Activities such as trips to Geneva, art work to commemorate the first world war, an annual school eisteddfod and participation in the BBC's 'Big Questions' programme develop pupils' understanding of culture and the wider world effectively.

The school council is an active body that contributes positively to many aspects of school life. These pupils play a valuable role in decision-making, such as in the selection of the new digital homework planner.

The school has suitable transition arrangements for pupils joining the school and for those moving into sixth form. These enable students to settle quickly into their studies. The school provides useful guidance for pupils at the end of key stage 3 and key stage 4 to help them make informed decisions about their future learning and career choices. The school offers pupils in Year 10 valuable opportunities to undertake work experience placements.

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and there are no significant areas for concern. However, a few health and safety matters were raised with the school during the course of the inspection.

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

The acting headteacher has established and communicated a clear vision for the school based around the motto, 'Committed to Achievement'. This vision is understood well by staff and the school community. Leadership has had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, for example in the development of pupils' Welsh language skills and in securing high levels of attendance. However, it has not secured consistent enough improvement in a few important areas for example in maintaining positive outcomes for pupils in key stage 4 and ensuring positive enough attitudes to learning.

Recent changes in leadership have required the school to reallocate senior leadership responsibilities. The interim leadership structure has a suitably strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. However, a few senior leaders do not have sufficient time to be fully effective in their roles. Leadership roles are well defined, and lines of accountability are suitably clear. Line management arrangements focus appropriately on pupil achievement and wellbeing. Overall, there is too much variation in how rigorously line management is carried out. This limits the school's ability to ensure that all staff are fully effective in their roles.

Many middle leaders understand their roles well and lead their areas of responsibility successfully. They analyse performance data carefully to identify areas for improvement and they use this information to amend their provision suitably. These leaders have a detailed understanding of the specific strengths and areas for development in teaching. This helps them to identify improvement priorities accurately. A majority of middle leaders use a wide variety of first-hand evidence to plan a suitable range of actions that are focused on improving the quality of teaching and standards. They evaluate carefully the impact of teaching on pupil progress and

identify whole-school, departmental and individual targets for improvement. A majority of subject leaders use book scrutiny activities and pupil feedback well to evaluate and amend their provision.

There is too much variation, in how effectively leaders carry out their roles. In particular, a minority do not evaluate their areas of responsibility rigorously enough. For example, they do not focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress when carrying out lesson observations or scrutinising pupils' work. Overall, leaders do not use pupil feedback well enough to evaluate pupils' wellbeing either. This makes it difficult for them to identify and address specific areas for improvement. In addition, they do not specify how they will assess the impact of initiatives clearly enough. These shortcomings limit how well these leaders are able to plan strategically for improvement.

Leaders have been successful in developing a culture that promotes and values continuous professional learning for all staff. The school has a wide range of links with other providers, including local schools and higher education institutions that enhance the professional learning of staff. There are beneficial links with the regional consortium to support the training and development of newly qualified teachers. Staff have a wide range of opportunities to share good practice both within and between departments. The school uses its performance management processes well to identify whole-school, departmental and individual needs and plan professional learning activities that match closely the school's improvement priorities.

The headteacher and business manager, supported by the governing body, monitor the school's finances carefully. Spending is linked closely to the school's improvement priorities. It makes appropriate use of grant funding such as the Pupil Development Grant to support vulnerable pupils. This has had a positive impact on the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals and has contributed suitably to their outcomes at key stage 4.

Governors are enthusiastic and committed supporters of the school. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and provide leaders with a suitable level of challenge.

## 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))

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

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	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](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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