



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

A report on

**Croeserw Primary School
Bryn Siriol
Cymmer
Port Talbot
SA13 3PL**

Date of inspection: January 2020

by

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

About Croeserw Primary School

Croeserw Primary School is in the Neath Port Talbot local authority. There are 159 pupils on roll, including 17 nursery pupils who attend part-time. There are seven mixed-age classes and one single-age class. These include two local authority resource classes for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the past three years is around 61%. This is well above the average for Wales of 18%. The school has identified around 35% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is considerably higher than the national average of 21%. A few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all pupils are white British and speak English at home. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

Croeserw Primary School, along with Glyncorrwg, Cymer Afan and Pen Afan Primary Schools, is part of the Upper Afan Valley Federation of Schools, which formed in September 2013. The federation was previously one of five schools, but reduced to four primary schools after the closure of Cymer Afan Comprehensive School in July 2019.

The headteacher of the federation took up the post in September 2019; he had been the primary phase leader since 2013. Each primary school has a lead learner who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.

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

All staff provide pupils with effective care, support and guidance and place a high priority on ensuring that they have high levels of wellbeing. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe in school and enjoy its welcoming and inclusive environment. Strategies to improve behaviour are successful in ensuring that pupils behave well at lunchtime and break times and that they are ready to learn at the start of lessons. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work well together. However, their problem-solving skills are underdeveloped and they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop skills such as resilience and perseverance.

Nearly all pupils start school with skills lower than expected for their age. As they move through the school, many make suitable progress in their literacy, numeracy and ICT (information and communication technology) skills. Teachers provide learning experiences that excite and engage pupils but they do not always adapt tasks and activities well enough to match the needs of those of all abilities. As a result, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Provision in the learning resource classes is a strength of the school. Pupils in these classes make good progress and participate in all aspects of the school's life.

Since the establishment of the federation of primary schools in September 2019, the headteacher and the lead learner at Croeserw have continued to focus on the wellbeing of pupils as an important priority. School leaders collect a broad range of information about pupils' achievements and use this well to plan interventions for pupils needing extra support. However, their monitoring and evaluation activities do not focus well enough on evidence from classroom practices including the quality of teaching and the standards that pupils achieve. Arrangements to share best practice in teaching and in provision for skills across the federation are at an early stage of development.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve teaching and learning so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- R2 Improve provision to develop pupils' literacy skills, particularly in reading
- R3 Develop pupils' independent learning skills, including their capacity to reason, solve problems and improve their own work
- R4 Strengthen the contributions of leaders at all levels, across the federation, particularly to evaluation and improvement work
- R5 Improve attendance and punctuality

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

Nearly all pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. As they move through school, many make appropriate progress in their learning. Most pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in meeting their targets.

Many pupils listen well to adults and to each other. Pupils in the nursery class listen with enjoyment to the story of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. In key stage 2, pupils listen effectively to others in their group when planning how to carry out a fair test in a science investigation. Most pupils have weak speaking skills when they start school. However, they develop these skills appropriately as they move through the foundation phase. Pupils in Year 2 describe a missing dinosaur, giving details of her appearance and where she was last seen. Many older pupils in key stage 2 speak confidently. For example, pupils in Year 6 explain how they use the green screen to enhance their news reports. Across the school, pupils use a limited vocabulary when talking and this impacts negatively on their reading comprehension and limits their writing skills.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the sounds that letters make. By Year 2, many pupils use these skills to help them to read simple words. However, they are not able to apply these skills to reading longer or unfamiliar words and a minority do not have a wide enough sight vocabulary. As a result, they do not read accurately and lose the meaning of what they are reading as they focus on attempting to identify individual words. In key stage 2, many pupils make suitable progress in developing reading skills. Pupils in Year 5 who are more able locate information in non-fiction books by scanning the text for specific words. Many Year 6 readers read accurately. They enjoy reading and can name favourite authors including Enid Blyton and Michael Morpurgo. However, across the key stage many pupils' comprehension skills are underdeveloped. They read aloud fluently but find it difficult to understand fully the texts that they are reading.

Many pupils in reception can form familiar letters, such as those that are in their name. In Year 1 they form letter shapes accurately and by Year 2 many write in simple sentences, for example to produce information leaflets about planets. Pupils who are more able use basic sentence punctuation including capital letters at the start and full stops at the end of sentences. As they move through key stage 2, pupils begin to understand how to write using an increasing range of genre. For example, in Year 4, pupils write a set of rules about using the internet safely. Pupils in Year 6 write letters about being an evacuee and newspaper reports about Anne Frank. Across the school, most pupils' spelling skills are appropriate to their age and ability. However, they write using a limited vocabulary range. Many do not use punctuation consistently well independently. Across the school, the standards of pupils' handwriting and presentation have improved.

Most pupils' Welsh language skills develop appropriately. In the foundation phase, many sing songs and rhymes that help them to learn Welsh words and phrases. By Year 5, many respond to simple Welsh commands appropriately, for example when

responding to the register. They use simple familiar vocabulary to ask questions in Welsh, for example 'beth wyt ti'n hoffi fwyta?'. Nearly all have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh.

Most pupils have suitable number skills. In the reception class, they use these appropriately, for example to count blocks to measure the length of a hamster. In Year 2, many recognise numbers up to one hundred and order them from the smallest to the largest accurately. A majority recognise and identify coins correctly, with a very few adding up values within one pound. By the end of key stage 2, pupils generally use their numeracy skills appropriately to reason and solve problems related to their topic work. They work out how much food a family would receive with wartime ration cards and the distance that evacuees travelled to their new homes during the Second World War. However, most pupils' reasoning, problem solving and number skills are at a lower level than expected across the school.

Many pupils have appropriate ICT skills. In the foundation phase, many pupils use tablet computers, for example to take photographs. Most pupils in Year 2 create pictograms successfully to show the different pets belonging to pupils in the class. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their ICT skills well to communicate information, for example producing presentations about Tutankhamen and writing letters of application for the role of head girl. Most pupils make simple animations, for example to show how the earth moves around the sun and program apps to make simple patterns. However, pupils' use of a wider range of ICT skills such as data handling is underdeveloped.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel safe within its caring environment. Most pupils know who to speak to if they are upset or worried and they are confident that staff will deal with their concerns sensitively. Nearly all pupils behave well in class and around the school.

There are strong working relationships between pupils and staff, based on mutual respect. Many pupils are developing a sound understanding of children's rights and they promote these well across the school, for example by designing posters and speaking in school assemblies.

Most pupils understand what they need to do to stay healthy. They know that exercise is good for them and the type of foods that they should eat. Many pupils understand the importance of drinking water throughout the day and eating fruit in school. Pupils who have breakfast in school make healthy choices including cereals and milk. Nearly all pupils enjoy regular physical activity at playtimes and many attend extra-curricular clubs and activities such as Fit Club.

Many pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe on-line. They understand the importance of not sharing their passwords and being careful not to share personal information.

Over the past four years, pupils' attendance does not compare well with that of pupils in similar schools. A few pupils are persistently late arriving for the start of the school day. However, pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly.

Pupils take an active part in the life of the school by taking on leadership roles through a variety of pupil groups, such as the eco committee and the Criw Cymraeg. These roles are starting to have an impact on the life and work of the school. For example, members of the school council have started to improve the school's outdoor areas. Pupils raised funds to buy new resources and equipment for the school playground. This has had a positive impact on how well pupils cooperate and play with each other during break and lunch times. Digital leaders provide support for other classes by ensuring technology equipment is ready for classroom use and members of the eco-committee help to keep the school environment free from litter. Many pupils are beginning to contribute ideas to what and how they learn, but this is at an early stage of development.

Many pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning and engage in classroom tasks with enthusiasm. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 give interesting presentations to their peers about their visit to Techniquest linked to their science topic. They share their work and listen attentively to each other, and a very few provide feedback to others on what they can do to improve. A minority of pupils are beginning to develop skills that enable them to face challenges with confidence, but their reasoning and problem solving skills are generally underdeveloped. Most work effectively together in pairs and small groups. In Years 4 and 5, pupils collaborate well when planning how to carry out a fair test in a science investigation. They take account of the contributions of others and adopt different roles when completing the activity. For example, one pupil takes measurements while another uses a laptop to record these in a table.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Many teachers deliver lessons that engage the pupils successfully in their learning. They introduce new topics in a lively and imaginative way, and make effective use of educational visits as a stimulus for learning. Pupils in the foundation phase visit Swansea Marina as part of their topic relating to travel and older pupils visit St Agnes Church to learn about baptism. These visits succeed in promoting pupils' understanding of the local area effectively.

Staff make appropriate use of several schemes of work to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, access a broad curriculum. Planning takes account of national frameworks, and ensures appropriate opportunities for pupils to consolidate skills in their work across the curriculum. However, teachers do not always take account of the progression steps in these plans. They do not incorporate a wide enough range of skills into their classroom activities to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, particularly in terms of developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Teachers provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their literacy skills. These include sessions that focus on developing their understanding of phonics in the foundation phase and guided reading sessions in key stage 2. However, these sessions are not as effective as they could be in developing pupils' reading skills. Phonic sessions focus too much on pupils recording letters and sounds on worksheets and texts used for guided reading do not always match well to pupils' reading abilities. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils in the foundation phase write factsheets about famous astronauts and pupils in Year 6 write biographies of famous scientists

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills and apply these in their work across the curriculum. In Year 4, many pupils use their understanding of area and perimeter to design gardens for NASA's trainee astronaut centre. Provision for pupils to develop and apply their ICT skills is appropriate. However, planning for skills' development does not always build systematically on pupils' learning as they progress through the school.

Teachers make suitable provision for pupils in the foundation phase. In many classes, there is a balance between focused activities to help pupils to develop skills and time for them to work independently to consolidate these. However, this practice is not consistent across all classes. In a few instances, pupils spend too much time on adult-directed activities and have too few opportunities to learn through active play or to direct their own learning. The school's provision for outdoor learning is underdeveloped.

Nearly all teachers and teaching assistants create positive working relationships with pupils. They use effective strategies to promote good behaviour and this helps to create a calm and purposeful learning environment. Many teachers use a range of approaches to engage pupils including opportunities for them to work together in small groups and pairs. Many teachers use questions effectively to develop pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. Across the school, pupils of all abilities complete the same tasks and activities. This results in a lack of challenge, particularly for pupils who are more able. As a result, over time and within individual teaching sessions, these pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Nearly all teaching assistants work effectively with groups and individual pupils on a wide range of intervention programmes.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate. The school has raised the profile of the Welsh language successfully, which is leading to increased opportunities for pupils to speak Welsh. As a result, pupils' Welsh language skills are improving. They are developing confidence to use Welsh in lessons and less formal situations such as play times. Provision for pupils to develop and apply their ICT skills is appropriate.

Teachers' feedback to pupils does not provide them with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, most pupils do not always understand the next steps in their learning. This often leads to repetition of work at a similar standard. For example, when re-drafting written work their finished pieces are the same as or in a few instances less accurate than their original work. Overall, teachers do not support pupils well enough to develop the skills they need to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an inclusive and welcoming community, where adults and pupils work together in a calm and friendly environment. Staff and pupils are proud of their school and show each other high levels of care and respect. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school's provision to support the wellbeing of pupils is a strong feature of its work. Staff know the pupils well and respond positively to their social and emotional needs by providing access to school based counselling sessions, for example. Teachers and teaching assistants provide high quality intervention sessions that focus well on building greater resilience in dealing with heightened emotions and anxieties. A recent whole-school focus on improving behaviour has been successful. Teachers and teaching assistants apply consistent approaches to promoting positive behaviour and, as a result, most pupils behave well in class and in the playground.

The school caters very well for the needs of pupils who have special educational needs both through its mainstream provision and the learning resource classes. Teachers identify at an early stage pupils with special educational needs and those who require extra support. Teachers know which interventions are most appropriate to meet each individual pupil's behaviour and learning needs. They use these carefully to address their academic and wellbeing needs. Staff work effectively with support services such as the speech and language therapists, to ensure that pupils have the extra support they require. Teachers and teaching assistants use effective strategies to support those who have emotional needs, such as the use of play-based sessions to help develop pupils' social skills. The provision that the school makes for pupils in the learning resource classes is a strength of the school. Pupils in these classes develop independence and integrate well into mainstream classes when appropriate. They make valuable contributions to the life and work of the school by taking on leadership roles, such as that of head boy.

The school has appropriate procedures for tracking pupils' progress and wellbeing. Teachers assess pupils' skills accurately on entry, and monitor their progress as they move through the school. They analyse a range of pupil attainment information regularly to check the progress that pupils make in reading, spelling and numeracy. Staff use this information appropriately to plan interventions for pupils who make slower than expected progress.

Overall, the school maintains a positive working relationship with parents. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children's learning, for example by helping them to understand how they teach reading. Teachers provide useful information to parents about the progress that their children make through having regular meetings with them and by providing them with end of year reports. A few parents are active members of the parents' association and help to organise activities such as fairs and the end of year event for pupils leaving Year 6.

Staff provide pupils with good opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of the school's work, for example through belonging to one of its pupil leadership groups. Teachers help pupils to develop worthwhile life skills, such as learning how to make a successful application to become the school's head girl or boy. However, opportunities for pupils to influence the curriculum and to make decisions about how and what they learn are limited.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. The fruit tuck shop sells healthy options including apples and oranges to pupils at playtime. The school supports a local foodbank and this provides opportunities for staff to talk to pupils about nutrition.

The school's regular assemblies provide good opportunities for staff to develop pupils' spiritual and moral awareness. School leaders use stories from the Bible to help pupils to reflect on important issues in society today, such as the need for everyone to have access to clean water. Staff and pupils use assemblies to promote the school's values and to encourage aspiration, for example by discussing how pupils should be proud of their talents.

The school provides suitable opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development. Teachers arrange visits to local theatres. For example, pupils in the foundation phase visited the theatre in Swansea to watch a performance of the Butterfly Hunter. Members of the school choir sing at community events such as joining the local Mayor to celebrate Christmas at the local community centre. This enhances their understanding of the importance of belonging to the local community.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

Since taking up overall leadership of the federation in September 2019, the headteacher has worked successfully to develop a shared vision for ensuring the wellbeing and nurture of pupils across the federation. This vision includes a commitment to meeting the physical, social and emotional needs of pupils. This work is effective and ensures that all the schools benefit from a calm atmosphere where pupils behave well and engage with their learning positively.

The vision to promote collaboration between the schools is developing well and is becoming influential in a number of ways. These include shared planning, consistent approaches to safeguarding pupils and common approaches to financial management. The developing culture of sharing is beneficial for staff and pupils. For example, it ensures that pupils receive a similar range of learning experiences and leads financial efficiencies so that events such as educational visits are viable and affordable.

In addition to the headteacher, there is a senior member of staff in each school. These members of staff undertake the role of lead learners. They take day-to-day responsibility for the leadership of school sites in the absence of the headteacher. In addition, they lead and monitor curriculum planning for pairs of year groups across the federation. This is beneficial in promoting shared working and building a team ethos. However, as a result of their focus on leading specific age groups across the federation, in too many cases, lead learners do not have a strong enough understanding of the quality of provision or the standards and progress of pupils in their own schools. In a few instances, lead learners have made valuable contributions to the professional skills of colleagues, for example by ensuring consistent use of the foundation phase profile when pupils join each school and by raising the profile of the Welsh language across the federation.

The lead learner at Croeserw School has responsibility for the strategy to improve pupils' wellbeing across the federation. Under his leadership, staff at Croeserw school implement a range of interventions to support and improve pupils' social skills and emotional wellbeing successfully. They track the progress that they make effectively to ensure that the interventions meet the needs of individual pupils. This work has had a positive impact on pupils. For example, a focus on improving pupils' experiences on the school yard at lunchtime has resulted in improvements in behaviour. This in turn means that pupils are more settled and ready to learn during the afternoon.

School leaders gather considerable amounts of pupil progress information in an electronic tracking system. The headteacher uses this and other information, for example evidence from learning walks, to identify a few appropriate areas for improvement across the federation. These include the need to improve pupils' Welsh language skills. However, the headteacher and lead learners do not always consider other first-hand evidence well enough, such as the range and quality of work in pupils' books and in lessons when evaluating provision and standards. Consequently, leaders do not always identify important shortcomings in pupils' skill development or opportunities to improve teaching and learning experiences well enough. Over time, leaders have not drawn well enough on examples of highly effective teaching and learning that exist within the federation to improve professional practice and raise standards. Overall, the federation does not have a clear strategy to improve teaching in all schools. This limits the standards that pupils achieve.

There is effective co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Each school has an effective leader for special educational needs provision. They have developed a strong culture of sharing practice, resources and practical advice. This benefits teachers and support staff well and ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Professional learning opportunities for teaching assistants are beneficial. They ensure that these members of staff have the skills to support pupils to progress through a range of useful intervention strategies. This is particularly valuable in enhancing nurture provision for pupils.

Governors aspire to provide high standard of education in the Upper Afan Valley. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the federation's leaders, for example in relation to the allocation of funding from budget to each of the schools. They know the federation's priorities for improvement and have suitable processes in place to monitor progress towards these goals. For example, governors look at pupils' work and take part in learning walks. They contribute appropriately to the developing culture of shared working, for example by supporting the federation to develop shared policies and processes for safeguarding.

School leaders allocate funding appropriately to support school improvement. They make suitable use additional funding from the pupil development grant to fund staff and intervention programmes to improve pupils' wellbeing and basic skills.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2020: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 30/03/2020