A report on

High Cross Primary

High Cross Drive
High Cross
Rogerstone
Newport
NP10 9AB

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About High Cross Primary

Name of provider	High Cross Primary
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	267
Pupils of statutory school age	209
Number in nursery classes	31
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	9.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	19.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	November 2013
Start date of inspection	24/10/2022

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

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

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

Overview

High Cross Primary school is a happy school where pupils show respect and consideration in lessons, playtimes and as they move around the school. They are enthusiastic in lessons and enjoy their learning. When they first join the school, many pupils have communication and numeracy skills at or above the level expected for children of their age. They build successfully from these starting points and develop effective literacy and mathematical skills as they move through the school. They make particularly good progress in their oracy and reading skills. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in their learning.

The curriculum provides an appropriate range of learning experiences across the curriculum that motivate and engage pupils and as a result most make suitable overall progress from their starting points. Teachers' planning for the pupils' skills is at a relatively early stage of development. There are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across other areas of the curriculum and develop their digital and Welsh language skills.

Leaders, staff and pupils succeed in developing an environment where nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are valued and respected. The recent developments to improve the learning environment have resulted in calm and relaxing spaces where pupils can learn and socialise with their friends.

Leaders worked effectively with partners to create a shared vision for the school through the development of the school's moto 'Together we grow and shine.' They broker effective support from neighbouring schools to help develop important aspects of their work and have a positive impact on the pupils and staff. Leaders set goals for improvement and use resources carefully. However, these plans do not always focus sharply enough on improving outcomes for pupils.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that school development targets are specific and focus sharply on improving outcomes for pupils

R2 Secure progression in pupils' learning by ensuring that the curriculum builds systematically and coherently on their' existing skills, knowledge and understanding

R3 Improve pupils' digital skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils enter the nursery with good communication and social skills. Most listen well and respond quickly to instructions from an early age. They speak clearly and communicate their needs effectively to adults and when at play with other pupils. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make at least suitable progress in most areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils have good listening skills. They use these skills well to develop their understanding of phonics. Over time this supports their development as readers. Most older pupils read well. This helps them to access all areas of the curriculum, read fiction books for enjoyment and carry out research related to class topics. The oldest pupils tackle a variety of texts confidently and enthusiastically and use inference and deduction skilfully. For example, they know that authors often convey characters' emotions by describing their physical responses to situations, so can predict what might be going through their minds.

Throughout the school, pupils' speaking skills are generally strong. Many young pupils ask and answer questions with growing confidence and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately when playing and discussing their work. Older pupils build well on these strong foundations. Many explain their learning articulately and, by Year 5 and Year 6, use language adeptly to reason, persuade and form arguments. Overall, most pupils make good progress as writers. Early in the school, many enjoy mark-making and soon understand that writing conveys meaning, for example, when creating shopping lists to use in the class shop or writing messages to family members in greetings cards. As they move towards Year 2, pupils gradually begin to write for a wider range of purposes, for example, listing simple instructions and re-creating a story based on their class reading book. By the upper end of the school, many write well in an increasing range of styles and genres, including poetry, making useful notes when carrying out research, and using persuasive language to form arguments. However, overall, pupils do not write at length often enough to increase their writing stamina.

A relatively new approach to the teaching of mathematics in the school has resulted in most pupils having a renewed enthusiasm for this area of the curriculum. The youngest pupils use mathematical vocabulary appropriately in their play. For example, nursery pupils describe a pumpkin as the largest and heaviest vegetable in the class fruit shop. From reception class upwards, pupils respond eagerly to fast-paced mental maths sessions and introductions to new mathematical ideas. For example, most Year 3 pupils grasp the concept of the symbols for 'greater than', 'less than' and 'equal to' quickly and use them correctly to show the relationship between two-digit numbers. Year 4 pupils learn various methods of adding two and three-digit numbers, with the more able explaining their working clearly and concisely using the correct terminology. They apply their learning well to solve number problems and provide reasons for their responses. Higher up the school, nearly all pupils multiply and divide by 10 and 100 efficiently and confidently. They have a sound understanding of the link between multiplication and division and between decimals and fractions. They enjoy choosing and tackling challenges at various levels of

difficulty, and the more able relish setting challenges for their peers and adults. Currently, however, pupils do not use their numeracy skills well enough across other areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 have a range of appropriate digital skills. They create presentations with photographs, text, and animations, make videos to share on digital platforms and are beginning to use coding skills to create their own games. However, in other classes in the school, pupils' digital skills are very limited.

Many pupils are proud of being Welsh and are enthusiastic to learn about Welsh culture its language and heritage. Younger pupils respond appropriately to simple commands in Welsh but use very little Welsh themselves. Higher up the school, most pupils join in Welsh games enthusiastically. They are developing a sound understanding of letter sounds in Welsh and are beginning to appreciate the link between the skills they use in both English and Welsh. With encouragement, a majority of older pupils recall a suitable range of vocabulary and answer simple questions about themselves and their families. However, most lack confidence to use their Welsh and their progress from class to class is limited.

The development of pupils' physical skills is a strength. The youngest pupils ride a range of wheeled vehicles adeptly and demonstrate good balance on low apparatus. Across the school, many pupils demonstrate considerable dexterity, for instance when cutting out shapes, handling small resources, and practising their letter formation and handwriting skills. Many have good spatial awareness when playing games and taking part in sporting activities, and they use their bodies creatively to make shapes and move in different ways in physical education lessons.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud members of High Cross School and speak highly of their experiences at school. They are courteous and respectful to each other. They look out for one another during playtimes and want playtimes to be a fun time for everyone. They feel safe in school and feel confident to go to adults for care and support when needed. Nearly all pupils behave well in class, when moving around the school and at breaktimes.

Pupils develop leadership skills and take responsibility appropriately through a range of worthwhile pupil groups. For example, the school improvement group is beginning to support teachers and leaders in making decisions that make the school a better place for all. Digital leaders help to ensure others understand the importance of online safety through internet safety days.

Pupils are confident when speaking to visitors about their learning. For example, older pupils use correct vocabulary when describing rocks and explain the differences between reversible and irreversible change.

In the younger classes, most pupils engage well in their play and focus on activities for a reasonable amount of time, taking their age and stage of development into account. As pupils move through school, they settle quickly and concentrate well for their age. Most pupils are ready to learn and collaborate well in class and share resources amicably. Many speak confidently and clearly when discussing their work.

They talk about the work they are proud of, particularly in maths, and can explain why sometimes the learning is challenging. Nearly all pupils take pride in their work. Across the school, pupils take turns and show enjoyment in their learning.

Pupils value the feedback given to them by teachers and teaching assistants, however, this is not always given in a timely fashion to allow them to immediately improve their work. Pupils are not always given time to respond to feedback that allows them to improve and make progress in their learning.

Pupils throughout the school develop strong relationships with their peers. They collaborate and interact well with each other in their work and play. Where pupils struggle at times to manage their emotions, they are supported effectively through a range of targeted interventions and safe calm places to go.

Pupils respond positively to the range of extracurricular activities at the school to develop their physical and digital skill and learn Spanish. Pupils understand and discuss how they can keep healthy and understand the importance of physical activity and a good diet.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has developed a clear vision and aims for its curriculum. Overall, this vision and the aims of the school's curriculum takes good account of the statements of what matters, the four purposes and the areas of learning and experience of the Curriculum for Wales. The school has also provided workshops to help parents to learn about the Curriculum for Wales.

Within a framework of interesting overarching topics, teachers plan specific themes each term that relate well to the needs and interests of the pupils. In many cases, pupils have suitable opportunities to contribute ideas for what and how they learn, although this is in the early stages of development. Staff encourage pupils to engage in a 'sparkly starter' to pique their interest at the beginning of each topic. Inquiry questions and enrichment events such as visits to the local area with opportunities for pupils to present their topic work to others help to maintain pupils' interest as their learning progresses.

Staff work closely with the local cluster of schools to develop a curriculum to aid transition from Year 6 to Year 7. At the same time, it enables the school to respond to the specific needs of its pupils and the community. Teachers' termly topic planning enables then to reflect on pupils' progress within that term. However, the school's current planning arrangements do not ensure that teaching and learning experiences build systematically on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, teaching does not always secure enough progress in pupils' learning as they move through the school.

Strong working relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress. In most cases, teachers plan interesting learning activities that engage pupils well. Lessons proceed at a good pace and staff use a variety of appropriate strategies to maintain pupils' interest. Knowledgeable and competent support staff work skilfully with pupils to help them to make good progress.

In a few areas of the curriculum, especially in mathematics, teachers provide good challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pupils appreciate opportunities to extend themselves and make decisions about the level of challenge. However, learning activities do not always provide appropriate challenge in all areas of the curriculum.

In most cases, teachers and support staff know their pupils' strengths and areas for improvement well. Regular pupil progress meetings focus well on pupils' day-to-day learning and enable them to identify individuals who may not be progressing as well as usual and need some support. To support their understanding of pupil progress, most staff are beginning to use aspects of day-to-day assessment successfully. For example, they often question pupils purposefully to challenge their thinking.

Most teachers ensure that pupils understand the purpose of lessons and what they expect of them by the end of the session. They discuss and model learning outcomes appropriately. Many teachers and support staff use verbal feedback skilfully during lessons to help pupils take their next steps and move forward in their learning. For instance, they respond positively when pupils offer alternative solutions to problems and use their suggestions as examples to inspire other pupils. However, staff do not always focus their feedback well enough on the learning intention of the lesson, and pupils do not routinely have enough opportunities to respond to feedback, for instance to edit and improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school assesses pupils' well-being effectively and staff provide worthwhile additional support and interventions for pupils' personal and social development when needed.

Systems to support pupils with additional learning needs have improved recently. Where needed, staff link well with outside agencies to gain specialist advice and help. This enhances the support provided for pupils with additional learning needs well. Although the school currently has no permanent additional learning needs co-ordinator, it has received effective support from a local school. As a result of this, the professional knowledge and practice of staff has improved and there is a strong understanding of additional learning needs reform. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress due to the carefully planned learning activities and interventions. Through progress meetings, staff know the individual needs of the pupils well. Staff involve parents and pupils in setting targets and reviewing progress appropriately within individual plans.

Morals and values are communicated through purposeful displays around the school. Assemblies based on the value of the month, make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils have opportunities to explore the world they live in by learning about influential people during Black History Month. Pupils also enjoy finding out about Diwali and how different faiths celebrate their religious beliefs. However, much of the work around cultural identity and heritage is at a relatively early stage of development.

Pupils have opportunity to participate in performances and events including a residential visit for Year 6 and a range of visits and visitors to support curriculum

learning. Pupils have also had the opportunity to share their learning with parents in curriculum engagement sessions.

The school provides a range of after school activities which pupils attend in good numbers. Pupil groups give many pupils the opportunities have their say and make positive changes within and around the school. For example, the Heddlu Bach group discussed how they can solve the issue of car parking outside the school grounds. However, these groups are in the early stages of giving pupils an appropriate voice in shaping the direction of the work in the school.

The school has established robust systems for the improvement of attendance. There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Staff understanding of safeguarding procedures is secure. Pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe, for example through lessons about internet safety.

Leadership and management

Leaders at High Cross Primary School together with its pupils, staff, governors and parents, have developed a vision for the school based on everyone learning together and striving to do their best. The headteacher has, through a recent period of uncertainty and change, provided the school with a sense of stability and direction, which has focused on improving pupils' well-being. This has resulted in happy pupils who feel well supported and cared for in a calm and inviting environment.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses through conducting a range of comprehensive self-evaluation and monitoring processes, such as considering the quality of pupils' work, lesson observations and learning walks. Plans for improvement are detailed but the school is currently trying to address too many priorities at the same time. In addition, when planning for improvement, leaders do not always focus sharply enough on improving outcomes for pupils.

Leaders create a positive culture that promotes and supports and values the professional learning of all staff, for example through weekly professional learning sessions. They provide worthwhile opportunities to work alongside local network schools to improve teaching and learning. A recent focus on developing staff skills in the teaching of maths has been particularly successful, resulting in pupils across the school making good progress in this area. However, professional learning opportunities for support staff do not always focus well enough on things that they would find most useful to them in their work.

 Leaders set high expectations for themselves and their staff. Generally senior leaders work well together to drive improvements in a few important areas such as developing the learning environment and improving the teaching of maths. Performance management procedures link appropriately with the schools' identified priorities for improvement.

Leaders address local and national priorities appropriately. This includes the Curriculum for Wales and ALN reform. Leaders work well across the cluster of

schools to support professional learning and address areas that require additional support. They work effectively together to broker targeted support to address current capacity issues within the school. For example, the strengthening of the co-ordination of ALN and the roll out of the act has been particularly successful. However, leaders do not ensure that pupils develop and use the full range of skills progressively as they move through the school, especially their digital skills.

The school makes purposeful use of the pupil development grant to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals, for example to fund the delivery of effective intervention programmes and educational visits. This has a positive effect on both pupils' well-being and the progress they make in their learning.

Leaders request the views of parents through annual questionnaires and informal feedback. They respond positively to their feedback and seek their views to further support developments within the school. For example, the headteacher has recently set up a parents' forum to gather the views of parents.

Governors have a good knowledge about the work of the school and provide a suitable level of challenge and support for leaders. They discharge their roles and responsibilities well and often bring useful expertise to their roles. They carry out their work diligently as a full governing body and as members of sub-committees. They, alongside school leaders, manage resources effectively. They allocate funding appropriately to support the school's priorities and make appropriate spending decisions to support professional learning and improvements to the learning environment. Governors work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. School leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school and have created a school where pupils feel, calm, safe and happy.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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