



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

A report on

Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen

**Cwmann
Lampeter
SA48 8EP**

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen

Name of provider	Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Non-denominational school
Number of pupils on roll	164
Pupils of statutory school age	157
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	26
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.0%)</i>	9.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	48%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2000
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27/01/2015
Start date of inspection	02/05/2023

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

The headteacher is experienced and leads the school robustly and effectively. What is important to him is that the school provides a good education for pupils in a modern, friendly and caring environment. He achieves this successfully and, as a result, the school is a safe and highly caring community where staff and pupils respect each other and give a strong priority to each other's well-being.

In addition to focussing on pupils' overall well-being, the school places a specific focus on their emotional needs and mental health. One effective technique that pupils use on a daily basis to share their feelings and concerns is the online well-being register. Through this, teachers respond to any pupils' concerns sensitively at the beginning of the school day.

Most pupils behave well; they are polite and courteous and are very caring of each other. Many make good use of the wide range of opportunities they are given to develop their leadership skills and influence the school's work. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, a minority have a tendency to turn to English too much at times and they are not given enough opportunities to use their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Most pupils' creative skills are developing very well.

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and work together effectively to plan broad and interesting learning experiences for them. They use the school building and outdoor areas efficiently to create a stimulating learning environment for pupils. One very strong feature of provision is the extensive opportunities that are provided for all pupils to take part in valuable outdoor activities. These rich experiences have had a positive influence on pupils' well-being and their awareness of the importance of being outdoors for extended periods.

Teachers assess pupils continuously and use this information effectively to plan the next steps for them. This is particularly effective in the foundation learning classes. All teachers provide valuable oral feedback to support pupils to improve their work. In many classes, where appropriate, teachers also provide them with effective written feedback. However, this practice is not always consistently effective.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that pupils speak Welsh regularly in learning sessions and at other times, considering their age and ability
- R2 Share good practice across the school in relation to the effective methods that exist where teachers respond to pupils' work
- R3 Plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in a variety of areas and interesting contexts

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how it provides opportunities for pupils to undertake a range of outdoor activities to promote healthy lifestyle practices, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who are eligible for free school meals, make good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils listen particularly attentively to each other and adults. Across the school, pupils' oral skills are developing soundly. In the foundation learning classes, namely the nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 2, they begin to develop simple vocabulary quickly. By the end of this stage, most use a wide vocabulary appropriately to talk about their work and experience and use local dialect naturally. Most older pupils' oral skills build successfully on their early oral skills in both languages. Most speak Welsh with increasing confidence and use appropriate vocabulary, for example when discussing the story and living conditions of Susan Rees from Merthyr in the coal mines. At the top of the school, most discuss their work intelligently and maturely in Welsh and English and use rich vocabulary to voice different views about hunting animals. However, a minority of pupils have too much of a tendency to turn to English during formal sessions and at other times.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing well. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of useful strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words correctly. By Year 2, they use their reading skills confidently and explain the content accurately. Many older pupils read intelligently in various contexts in both languages. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation purposefully to demonstrate their understanding. They read appropriately to gather information from different sources. For example, they research the history of Tryweryn as part of their theme work and explain clearly that the event is an important example of inequity, injustice and lack of respect of human rights at the time.

As they move through the school, most pupils' writing skills develop soundly. In the nursery and reception classes, most show an enthusiasm for writing by experimenting with mark making on the playground by using bottles of water. By Year 2, they write in an appropriate range of contexts, including creative genres. For example, they use simple adjectives and similes to describe the signs of winter on the school grounds. Many of the school's older pupils build on their writing skills successfully and demonstrate a secure grasp of familiar spelling patterns, paragraphing and punctuation, for example to write a persuasive speech about circus animals. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 write with increasing confidence in English and

use correct syntax and style. For example, they use historical images skilfully as a prompt for creative writing, such as the history of the Mimosa.

Most pupils' mathematical skills develop well as they move through the school. They calculate confidently at a level that is appropriate for their age and ability and apply their understanding to a variety of mathematical contexts, such as time, money, shape and measurement.

In the foundation learning classes, most pupils count objects confidently in the play areas, such as the number of small boats that are floating in the water tub. By Year 2, most place numbers in the correct order and are beginning to understand place value and number bonds and solve simple mathematical problems correctly. By the time they reach the top of the school, most understand that calculations can be carried out by using a variety of methods, depending on the situation, for example to calculate the price of a bike that is being sold at a discounted price. They understand how to round up or down to begin with and adapt their answer correctly to come to the final price.

Most pupils use their mathematical skills confidently in specific challenges each week. They also, less regularly, use them in a few other areas of the curriculum, such as in scientific investigations. However, they are given very few opportunities to apply them sufficiently across the curriculum in real-life situations.

Most pupils apply their digital skills confidently across different areas of the curriculum. In the foundation learning classes, they develop their digital skills appropriately. For example, they create simple animations based on a story and control a programmable toy to move to a specific location to show a journey around buildings in the local area. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 use a range of digital skills confidently. They use a number of programs to meet the needs of various audiences and purposes. They create multimedia presentations to express an opinion at the end of a theme and add a voiceover and music to their presentations. They have a sound understanding of staying safe online and have created a radio programme to disseminate this important message to their peers. They use spreadsheets appropriately and add formulae to calculate totals when organising a trip to Pen y Fan and to convey the results of an experiment on bridges.

Most pupils' creative skills develop very effectively. For example, a majority are confident when performing individually in the school eisteddfod and many play a musical instrument or accompany during whole-school assemblies. For example, they emulate the work of artists such as Kyffin Williams skilfully as part of their thematic work.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. They are polite and courteous towards each other and visitors. They listen carefully to what their friends and teachers say to them and respond to their ideas considerately. They are caring towards each other, take turns and support each other well while playing games and socialising during break time. Most behave well in lessons and move around the school quietly and calmly. Nearly all state that they feel safe at school. They know whom to approach if they need support and are confident that staff will listen to them and deal appropriately

with any concerns they may have. If pupils are worried about the well-being of other pupils, they share this with staff so that they can comfort them.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. They concentrate well on their tasks and complete them in a timely manner. Many persevere well with their tasks and work productively individually, in pairs and in small groups. By Year 6, many are ambitious and confident learners and plan and complete tasks independently.

Nearly all pupils participate actively when planning their termly themes. As a result, they take ownership of their work and demonstrate a high level of interest and engagement in it. Many respond positively to the opportunities they are given to reflect on their learning from an early age. Most respond well to feedback from staff on the standard of their work and understand what they need to do to improve and develop their skills further. Many of the school's older pupils make increasingly effective use of self-assessment and peer assessment procedures and are often keen to make changes to improve their original efforts. This increases their self-confidence and supports their progress. As a result, by the time they reach the top of the school, a majority have a clear understanding of their strengths and what they need to do to improve.

Many pupils make productive use of the wide range of opportunities they are given to develop their leadership skills on a variety of pupil's voice committees. While undertaking these roles, many explain confidently how their decisions have had a positive influence on the school's life and work. For example, they talk about the efforts of members of the eco committee to receive national recognition for their efforts in promoting sustainable practices. The '*Llewod Lles*' ("Well-being Lions") are another example where pupils talk very enthusiastically about their activities and responsibilities in supporting the emotional well-being of their peers. They are very proud of the '*Bocsys Becso*' ('Worry Boxes'), which are now in every class, to provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings and concerns with staff.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of cultural diversity, for example by learning about different religions. They understand some of the ethical issues that the modern world faces, such as the problems that plastic waste cause to the environment. They are proud of their efforts to support national and local charities, such as the local hospital's Chemo Appeal and the Wales Air Ambulance campaign. As a result of these initiatives, most pupils have a sound awareness of the need to help others in their local community and the wider world and develop their ability to become ethical and responsible citizens.

Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay safe online; for example, they know that they should not share their passwords with others. Many understand the importance of taking care of their own well-being and that of others, including the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking part in regular exercise to keep fit.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff work together effectively to plan broad and interesting learning experiences for pupils that are suitable for their age and ability. Themes are often based on the local area and Wales and encourage pupils to appreciate their community and understand

the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. Staff work together closely to decide on meaningful themes. They hold 'disclosure days' at the beginning of each theme to spark the pupils' imagination and enthusiasm and celebration days at the end of each theme. The activities that are planned are based on the ideas of pupils, parents and members of the local community. The curriculum is enriched further by inviting individuals from the community to share their experiences with pupils. For example, a member of staff from the local bank visited to discuss financial issues with pupils, in addition to where money comes from and the advantages of saving.

Staff check curricular provision regularly and effectively, and where necessary, plan activities to fill any gaps or to improve the learning experiences that are provided for pupils. For example, they have increased the input on developing pupils' digital skills recently, one they noticed that the experiences were not broad enough. The curriculum builds methodically on pupils' current knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure progression as they move through the school. Through close joint planning, staff ensure that there is not too much repetition in the experiences that are planned or teaching in the areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Teachers plan broad and appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, they apply their oral and digital skills to present a short film on the Seven Wonders of the World to their peers. However, opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their numeracy skills across other areas of the curriculum are limited.

There is a close working relationship between all staff and pupils. This creates an inclusive environment in all classes. Overall, teachers manage their classes effectively and have high expectations of pupils. They have a broad and sound knowledge of all areas and principles of the Curriculum for Wales and reflect this in their day-to-day teaching.

Support staff are very conscientious and support teachers effectively to develop pupils' skills and well-being. All staff know their pupils' needs well and tailor learning objectives appropriately to support and encourage them to achieve well in their tasks.

The majority of staff are good language models and take advantage of specific opportunities to introduce new vocabulary and language patterns to pupils. They use questioning methods effectively and encourage pupils to extend their responses. Teachers assess pupils continuously and use this information effectively to feed subsequent plans to develop their skills further in all areas. This is particularly effective in the foundation learning classes. All teachers provide valuable oral feedback to support pupils to improve their work. In many classes, where appropriate, teachers also provide them with effective written feedback. However, this practice does not always provide clear enough guidance to enable pupils to improve their work in all classes.

The classrooms are stimulating and engaging spaces where all groups of pupils, including those who are most and least able, can learn productively. A useful complement of linguistic resources on the walls is helpful to them and their own achievements and work are celebrated regularly. Resources are located in an organised way around the classrooms to encourage independence. Similarly, the outdoor areas are used effectively to develop pupils' skills and knowledge further.

Staff provide many practical, beneficial and interesting experiences for them and provide rich and free opportunities for them to experiment with a wide variety of resources. By doing so, they encourage them continuously to develop as independent and creative learners.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a highly caring community where staff and pupils treat each other with a high level of respect. Staff know the pupils' needs and backgrounds very well and meet their needs highly successfully. They place a high priority on pupils' well-being and ensure that they provide a supportive environment for them to feel safe at school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The school has an inclusive ethos and well-established and effective procedures to support pupils with additional learning needs. Staff monitor pupils' progress successfully and work diligently to introduce the new national arrangements in terms of supporting those with additional learning needs. There are comprehensive procedures to identify any pupils who need specific support and a clear system for planning specific interventions for them. They evaluate the effect of these provisions successfully based on their progress and well-being. As a result, nearly all pupils with additional learning needs gain confidence and show a new enthusiasm towards learning, in addition to a notable improvement in social skills while working towards their personal targets. Support staff provide pupils with good quality support by conducting programmes to develop their well-being and literacy and numeracy skills, as necessary. The school includes the pupils themselves, parents and external agencies, where appropriate, to plan the next steps for them. They do this highly effectively. They track pupils' progress in detail in relation to the targets in their personal plans and their progress from their individual starting points.

The school's stimulating environment and the rich opportunities provided for pupils to reflect and take part in collective worship promote pupils' moral and spiritual development successfully. Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to discover the features of different religions and reflect on fundamental questions based on their own beliefs or values. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' awareness of their rights. As a result, nearly all pupils have a clear and sound understanding of equity, equality and inclusion in their everyday lives. Staff encourage pupils to acknowledge and respect diversity and the importance of values such as tolerance and the need to care for others.

Provision to support all pupils to contribute to decisions at a whole-school level is good. Through the school council, well-being council and eco council, rich opportunities are provided for them to influence the school's life and work. The school also provides important opportunities for pupils to learn about humanitarian work and support charities such as the Wales Air Ambulance, among others.

There is a specific focus on supportive pupils' well-being, including their emotional and mental health needs. Staff ensure that pupils are given effective access to a range of appropriate programmes that help to deal with their feelings and emotions. An effective technique that is used by pupils on a daily basis to share their feelings

and concerns is the online well-being register. Through this, teachers respond to the concerns of any pupils sensitively at the beginning of the school day.

A very strong feature of the school's provision is the extensive opportunities that are provided to all pupils to take part in valuable outdoor activities. For example, during their time at the school, nearly all are given an opportunity to go mountain biking, horse riding, fishing, wild camping and orienteering locally. These rich outdoor experiences have had a very positive effect on the well-being of nearly all pupils. Although it has become established over a number of years, this arrangement has been extremely effective recently to meet pupils' health and well-being needs following the pandemic.

The school's procedures to ensure pupils' regular attendance are sound. Staff keep an appropriate record of absences and contact parents in a timely manner to discuss any concerns they have about their children's absence. The local authority's welfare services are used effectively to support this.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is an experienced leader and ensures that the school's strategic procedures are robust and effective. He has a clear vision that is based on providing the highest quality education for children and young people in the area. He does so in a modern and friendly environment with the full commitment of the professional, dedicated and caring staff who aim continuously to ensure the highest possible educational standards. He conveys this vision clearly to staff, parents, pupils and members of the local community.

The headteacher and other leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. They demonstrate professional values and behaviour that contribute positively to ensuring that the school is a safe and homely haven that values pupils' well-being and education. They foster a robust culture of safeguarding and monitor pupils' well-being and progress effectively. Leaders manage staff's performance continuously to praise them for their professional successes and encourage them to improve any specific agreed areas for improvement.

The school has detailed, comprehensive and robust self-evaluation procedures that are well-established. These procedures include all staff, in addition to a range of partners which include governors, pupils, parents and the local authority's education officers. They are based on first-hand evidence, give an accurate picture of the current situation and contribute directly to setting priorities in the improvement plan. The school's plans and procedures for improvement are also robust, effective and ensure improvements in the areas that have been identified as priorities. The school's detailed and regular monitoring procedures for measuring progress against its priorities enable leaders to adapt support or revise the focus, where necessary, to ensure the best improvement in all areas identified.

Leaders ensure that the staff's professional learning activities are based on national and local priorities and the specific needs of the individual. They focus directly on maintaining and improving pupils' progress and well-being. The recent focus includes developing middle leaders, improving staff's digital skills, introducing the Curriculum for Wales and effective outdoor learning methods, among others. Leaders monitor

the effect of professional learning on the effectiveness of teaching and leadership and on pupils' progress and well-being.

Governors ensure a sensible balance of support and challenge in their role as 'critical friends'. Ensuring the well-being of the headteacher and staff is a high priority for them. They hold regular discussions with the leaders of the different curricular areas and conduct appropriate learning walks to evaluate provision and standards. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This enables them to contribute directly to setting strategic priorities for the school and fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. They manage the school's resources, including the pupil development grant, prudently and ensure that they are used appropriately to promote learning. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have a productive and respectful relationship with parents and ensure that they have effective lines of communication so that they can raise any issues that may affect their children's learning and well-being. As a result of comments raised by parents through an annual questionnaire, a decision was made to broaden the media that are used to send messages to them. Leaders also hold useful sessions to inform them about any important issues, such as the changes to the curriculum and the like. Parents appreciate this greatly.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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 (<http://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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