



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

A report on

Cross Hands C.P. School

**Carmarthen Road
Cross Hands
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 6SU**

Date of inspection: July 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Cross Hands C.P. School

Name of provider	Cross Hands C.P. School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	143
Pupils of statutory school age	98
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 21.3%)</i>	14.3%
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 22.2%)</i>	10.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	28.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2005
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	14/10/2014
Additional information	

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

Cross Hands C.P. School is a happy and caring community where caring for pupils' wellbeing provides a firm foundation for all of its work. The school is federated with Drefach Primary School and both schools work together closely and successfully. The headteacher, leaders and members of the governing body have an effective overview of progress across both schools and they allocate resources effectively. Staff at both schools are employed by the federation and, as a result, there is beneficial flexibility that facilitates close co-operation. For example, teachers work together closely across the federation in leading aspects of the Curriculum for Wales. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and allow leaders to target priorities across the federation.

Most pupils make sound progress in terms of developing their basic skills. They listen to each other maturely and speak with increasing confidence by using local dialect naturally during their activities. However, they have a tendency to use English with their friends in less formal situations. Pupils' reading and writing skills are developing well and older pupils apply their skills successfully in both languages. Across the school, there is a close and supportive working relationship between staff and pupils. Teachers plan a rich range of activities that nurture increasing independence among the pupils. Teachers question effectively to encourage thinking and to give pupils an opportunity to develop their ideas.

Staff use technology skilfully to facilitate co-operation with Drefach Primary School. The school is a central part of its community and pupils learn a great deal about their area through their relationship with local elderly people. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and a caring ethos towards all pupils. However, the current arrangements for staff parking on the site and for the route for pupils and parents to access the school playground at the beginning and end of the day are not appropriate.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' oral Welsh skills

R2 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils

R3 Respond to the health and safety issue that was identified during the inspection

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, around half of pupils' basic skills correspond to what is expected for their age, except in Welsh where most are newcomers to the language. During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make appropriate progress in their learning.

Most pupils listen well to adults and each other. With regular support, the oral skills of the school's youngest pupils are developing effectively. By Year 2, many begin to converse confidently in Welsh about their work and experiences and use local dialect naturally. Most of the school's older pupils develop their oral skills appropriately in Welsh and English. They communicate effectively in both languages and contribute purposefully to class discussions by expressing their views clearly and maturely. For example, they contribute enthusiastically to discussions and weekly '*Gwener Geiriol*' or 'Fireworks Friday' debates. However, in less formal situations, most pupils have a tendency to turn to English when communicating with each other.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing well. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. By Year 2, they apply their reading skills confidently, for example when discovering information about the seaside. Many of the older pupils read intelligently in various contexts in both languages. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources. For example, they analyse food packets to calculate the calorific value to create balanced meals.

Most pupils' early writing skills are developing well. Most of the youngest pupils make marks, begin to form letters and write simple words. By Year 2, many write in an appropriate range of contexts for different audiences, for example when creating a poster to persuade people to visit Cross Hands School. Many of the school's older pupils build successfully on their writing skills in both languages. They demonstrate a sound grasp of familiar spelling patterns, paragraphs and punctuation. They adapt the style and structure for different contexts effectively, for example when writing a script about Arawn's invasion as part of their work on the Mabinogi or when writing a letter welcoming new pupils to their class.

In the school's youngest years, most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. They apply their calculation skills effectively, for example when solving addition and subtraction problems up to ten to discover how many chicks are missing. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have an intelligent grasp of number and measurement facts and handle money correctly. At the top of the school, they have a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. This enables them to interpret data in different ways and come to definite conclusions, for example when interpreting sea level graphs and predicting the effect of climate change on the world. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well. In the school's youngest years, most pupils create simple graphs successfully,

for example when discovering the class's favourite flavour of milkshake following a virtual interview with a local farmer. By Year 2, they combine their skills successfully, for example when using a coding program to create a simple animation. Most of the school's older pupils' skills build firmly on this foundation. For example, they use digital equipment confidently when composing a musical score and vary the beat and rhythm.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing soundly through a variety of beneficial experiences and activities. The school's youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example by using tongs to sort shapes of different sizes. The school's older pupils develop their physical skills successfully by taking part in activities that develop their co-ordination and agility and through regular health and fitness sessions.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe at the school. They discuss their feelings confidently on a daily basis within their classes, which contributes effectively towards supporting their confidence and emotional wellbeing. Nearly all pupils are friendly and polite and treat their peers and staff with respect. They are welcoming and very respectful towards visitors and are confident when discussing their work and the experiences they enjoy at school.

Nearly all pupils behave well during activities and around the school. They have a positive attitude towards their work. Most work enthusiastically and show an interest in their work. They persevere to complete tasks, for example when finding and counting coins that they discover in the sand pit. Many pupils are confident when choosing tasks and working independently. They concentrate and listen well, for example when enjoying a story about farm animals at the end of the day. Many pupils listen respectfully to the views of others, for example when discussing the effect of eating a healthy diet on our planet's environment or when discussing which flavour of milkshake they prefer. Most pupils contribute purposefully to their learning by providing ideas about what they would like to learn, for example when thinking about questions to ask the farmer about life on the farm and how many litres of milk a cow can produce in a day.

Most pupils understand the importance of making choices that affect their health. They use the school garden beneficially to grow vegetables and cook healthy meals. Most pupils understand the importance of keeping fit. They take part in physical activities in the classroom, during break time and lunchtime and in an after-school sports club. Pupils understand that emotional wellbeing is important and participate actively in health and wellbeing lessons that promote good mental health. Nearly all pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online.

Through a programme of interesting activities, most pupils develop an understanding of the importance of being moral citizens. During anti-bullying week, older pupils contribute purposefully to challenge stereotyping. Younger pupils celebrate diversity through '*Rydyn ni'n wahanol ond rydyn ni'n ffrindiau*' ('We are different but we are friends') sessions. Pupils also participate in planning activities to support charities; for example, they bake and sell cakes to raise money for children in Ukraine.

A few pupils enjoy undertaking leadership roles to sell fruit during break time. A few of the older pupils also undertake leadership roles by volunteering as bronze ambassadors. They undertake their roles conscientiously and develop their skills by leading physical sessions in their classes.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of Inspection Area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff work diligently to ensure strong working relationships with all pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour positively and work hard to nurture an inclusive and hard-working relationship. As a result, the supportive learning environment stimulates pupils' enthusiasm towards their learning successfully.

In the best practice, staff's presentations are lively and stimulate children to learn enthusiastically. On these occasions, staff vary their teaching techniques effectively by ensuring that pupils work independently, in pairs and in groups. Teachers and assistants question staff skilfully and encourage them to think deeply and consider their responses. Staff intervene skilfully at times to move learning forward with individuals and groups. Although staff have sound knowledge of pupils' ability and needs, progress-tracking procedures are not incisive enough to enable them to provide an appropriate level of challenge consistently for all groups of pupils.

Teachers explain new concepts effectively. They remind pupils about previous learning and make useful links with their current work. Teachers provide learning experiences that engage nearly all pupils' interest and prepare activities that motivate them to learn. For example, pupils plan 'Caffi Cross' and consider a strict budget and costs to ensure that they make a profit. As a result, they develop their ICT and numeracy skills effectively while working well together in groups to select healthy foods.

Teachers use praise and feedback purposefully to celebrate successes and guide pupils to the next steps in their learning. Opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their own performance and that of other pupils are developing appropriately. Staff reinforce and develop pupils' understanding and use of the Welsh language effectively during sessions. However, staff's expectations in terms of pupils' use of the Welsh language in less formal situations are inconsistent.

Across the federation, teachers plan valuable opportunities jointly to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils' standards and the way in which they apply these skills in different contexts across the curriculum are developing soundly. In the best practice, teachers plan purposefully to develop pupils' extended writing skills. However, this is not consistent across the federation.

The school is preparing purposefully in order to plan and introduce the Curriculum for Wales. It is experimenting with various tasks that are planned purposefully in line with the six areas of learning and experience and the statements of what matters. The

wider principles of the curriculum are developing effectively while nurturing pupils to become adventurous and creative learners.

Care, support and guidance

All of the school's staff work well together to create a caring community and a safe learning environment. The school has a clear vision, which ensures that the health and wellbeing of all pupils are a continuous priority. The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to keep fit in lessons and after-school clubs. There is also effective provision to support pupils' wellbeing. Staff provide an effective range of purposeful activities, which include the use of the forest and nature area, Annwn, and the vegetable garden. They also conduct valuable sessions that promote mental and physical reflection. The school has purposeful arrangements for eating and drinking healthily and pupils understand what they need to do to stay healthy.

Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to promote pupils' moral and spiritual development. They provide opportunities to reflect on current affairs and other religions in assemblies and class activities. By holding a session on challenging stereotypes during anti-bullying week, the school ensures that pupils develop an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. The school has valuable partnerships with charities and the wider community.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to celebrate and develop pupils' understanding of their identity and culture. They celebrate *'Shwmae Su'mae'* day and pupils cook Welsh cakes to celebrate their Welshness and St David's Day. The school has a robust partnership with the local community. A notable example is the programme of activities with *'Clwb Pontio'r Henoed'* in Cross Hands. Pupils benefit significantly from spending time with older members of the community by leading various activities and developing healthy relationships. This relationship that has become embedded over time is of benefit to pupils and spans the generations. The school has established a strong culture of respect and equality within its community, for example by contributing towards devising and creating a motto for the school, developing a new logo for the Cross Hands and Drefach federation and receiving a new bench for the playground from the 'Men's Sheds' charity.

The restrictions of the pandemic have impeded the ability of a few of the 'squads' and school councils to meet since the beginning of the year. However, teachers provide a few appropriate opportunities for pupils to influence some aspects of the school's life and work. The school's staff promote the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect successfully.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is sound and supports pupils' needs appropriately. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) works well with external agencies to provide purposeful sessions that meet pupils' needs. Appropriate interventions also support pupils with needs to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions are limited. The school provides purposeful individual development plans for pupils, which include opportunities to review them regularly.

The school has appropriate procedures to monitor pupils' attendance. It works effectively with welfare agencies to promote good attendance. The school has effective arrangements to contact the home when pupils are absent.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding children. There is a caring feeling and ethos towards all pupils. However, the current arrangements for staff parking on the site and for the route for pupils and parents to access the school playground at the beginning and end of the day are not appropriate.

Leadership and management

Leaders, teachers and assistants share a clear vision to develop the Cross Hands and Drefach primary school federation. This vision is based on close co-operation to promote pupils' wellbeing and progress. Leaders promote opportunities to share practice and expertise to develop pupils' confidence and curiosity towards their learning.

The role of the governing body is key in maintaining the momentum of co-operation across the federation. Members of the governing body know the schools very well. They support the headteacher and leaders effectively to develop elements of provision continuously. The schools' work is promoted significantly as staff are employed by the federation rather than the individual schools. As a result, leaders have useful flexibility to respond in line with the needs of both schools. This means that the governing body can allocate human resources to different classes in line with needs at the time.

Leaders have established rigorous procedures for identifying strengths and areas for development within the schools in the federation. Leaders and staff have detailed knowledge of the individual schools' strengths and a good understanding of the importance of working in partnership. They conduct a wide range of scrutiny activities, which include regular input from members of the governing body. This work focuses on different aspects of provision and allows them to have a useful strategic overview of the work of both schools and respond to their improvement needs. For example, they have prioritised the need to promote provision to boost pupils' Welsh oracy. Leaders manage the budget carefully and allocate money and resources to meet the current needs of the federation.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos that promotes and supports the professional learning of all staff successfully. Teachers and assistants state that they are given regular and valuable opportunities to share practice and expertise across the federation and that they benefit greatly from this work. There have been opportunities to focus on teaching to develop staff's understanding of the importance of pedagogy in preparing for the Curriculum for Wales. Staff have also focused on ensuring consistency in the level of challenge that is provided for pupils, although there is room to improve this further.

Leaders plan beneficial opportunities for staff's professional development, including a range of valuable training. For example, leaders responded to the aspirations of members of the schools' support staff by facilitating an opportunity for them to attend training to qualify as higher-level assistants and shoulder wider responsibilities. They now work together closely and this has had a positive effect on provision for the

federation's youngest pupils. Arrangements to promote professional development link directly with the school's priorities for improvement, for example by preparing for elements of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders allocate shared responsibilities to teachers and support staff across the federation. This has led to developing leadership skills and an awareness of the importance of evaluating the quality of provision and achievement across the different classes.

Leaders link professional learning clearly with self-evaluation findings and the school's priorities for improvement. They acknowledge effective features across both schools within the federation. Procedures for leading the Curriculum for Wales' areas of learning and experience are beginning to become embedded and provide a firm foundation for the federation to build on. Leaders and staff across the federation share good practice and also take advantage of opportunities to visit other schools to discuss and observe practice there. For example, teachers who work with pupils of the same age work together to present lessons, with one present in the class and the other present on a screen. This kind of activity promotes close and beneficial co-operation.

The school has beneficial partnerships with a range of agencies. For example, the relationship with a local club for the elderly promotes valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the history of their local area. There is a close-knit and supportive relationship between the school and parents. They work together closely to share information about pupils' progress and to discuss their wellbeing.

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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This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).