



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

A report on

Coedcae School

**Trostre Road
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA15 1LJ**

Date of inspection: February 2023

by

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

About Coedcae School

Name of provider	Coedcae School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	851
Pupils of statutory school age	851
Number in sixth form	
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 Secondary is 20.2%)	35.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 17.8%)	42.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	21/04/2015
Start date of inspection	27/02/2023

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

Coedcae School provides a highly inclusive and safe environment where pupils and staff are happy and thrive. Leaders' relentless focus on helping all pupils, whatever their background, to succeed has a notable impact on the progress and well-being of pupils, particularly the most vulnerable.

The headteacher provides assured and compassionate leadership. She has collaborated closely with her staff to develop a clear vision that gives all staff a sense of direction and purpose that helps them to secure strong outcomes for pupils.

Staff throughout the school forge positive working relationships with pupils and constantly encourage them to increase their aspirations and achieve their best. High expectations, along with teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, help pupils to make strong progress in many lessons. In a few lessons, pupils do not consistently make as much progress as they could.

The school has made strong progress in developing their Curriculum for Wales. Their vision for a successful curriculum is underpinned by a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils develop their subject knowledge and skills through broad and engaging learning experiences. This, along with a comprehensive extra-curricular offer and a wide range of subject choices in Key Stage 4, ensures that pupils have access to an engaging curriculum that caters well for their individual needs.

Leaders and staff have created a culture of safeguarding where most pupils feel safe and free from bullying at school. The support for pupils' well-being is highly effective, and the school provides exceptional, tailored support for those pupils with additional learning needs. The standard of care, support and guidance for pupils is exemplary, and this helps pupils and parents to feel valued as part of the school community. A particular strength is the way in which leaders identify and support vulnerable pupils, including those who are eligible to free school meals or from low-income households, to succeed. The school has supported pupils well to improve their attendance since their return to school following the pandemic, although those pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not attend as well as other pupils.

Leaders at all levels are committed to constantly evaluating their work to ensure that it has a strong impact on pupil progress and engagement. Their precise evaluation of an extensive range of information about learning, well-being and provision enables them to consistently plan for and secure further improvement.

Recommendations

R1 Continue to improve pupils' attendance, particularly that of those who are eligible for free school meals

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 two case studies on its work in relation to the way that the school supports the well-being and progress of vulnerable pupils to tackle the impact of deprivation and the school's approaches to evaluation and improvement, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

In many lessons, pupils recall prior learning well and make strong progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a few lessons, pupils make particularly strong progress, for example when revising key concepts and terms in mathematics. In a few instances, pupils' negative attitudes to learning or teachers' overly structured approach limit progress. Overall, pupils with additional learning needs make good progress against their targets. Vulnerable pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, or from low-income households, generally make secure progress.

Many pupils listen with attention and respect to their teachers and peers. They are keen to share their views and respond thoughtfully to teachers' questions. The majority of pupils understand and use subject specific vocabulary well to support and justify their responses during classroom discussions. A few pupils find it difficult to express their ideas or are reluctant to engage in conversations about their work.

Many pupils have sound basic reading skills and extract relevant information from a range of texts well. A majority are able to identify different techniques used by writers and examine the impact they have on the audience, such as when they consider how well persuasive techniques encourage readers to visit Llandudno. A majority use their inference and deduction skills well when, for example, considering how humour is used in the play 'Our Day Out' or when they consider what different sources of information tell them about conditions in prisons in the 18th century.

In many cases, pupils use an appropriate range of vocabulary to write in a technically secure and suitably structured way. This helps them to convey their ideas clearly and a few to produce writing that is engaging and imaginative. A minority of pupils have difficulty communicating their ideas clearly and a few make frequent basic errors in their spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Many pupils have generally secure number skills and add, subtract, multiply and divide competently. The majority have a sound understanding of shape and measure. They calculate the area of complex shapes and convert between metric and imperial units confidently. These pupils have a secure understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages, and work well with ratio and proportion, such as in design technology when they increase the amount of ingredients in a recipe to cater for different numbers of guests. The majority of pupils accurately draw a suitable range of graphs to represent a variety of data, for example when investigating which antacid tablets provide the best value for money in science. However, only a few pupils analyse their graphs sufficiently.

Pupils use their digital skills suitably for various purposes across the curriculum. They use a range of programmes, including spreadsheets, to input and analyse data, for example in physical education when they check heart rates to monitor fitness. The majority work confidently with databases and create hyperlinks or take screenshots to evidence their work. In general, pupils develop their physical skills well, such as

pivoting in netball. Pupils also demonstrate good levels of co-ordination when using sewing machines in design technology or when developing their aim in dodgeball.

In many lessons, pupils develop thinking skills well when, for example, considering the dangers patients faced during medical operations in the 19th century. A few pupils are particularly inquisitive and ask their teachers questions about a range of topics to improve their knowledge and understanding, though a few are too reliant on their teachers, limiting their ability to think independently. The majority of pupils develop their creative skills successfully, such as when they experiment with shade and tone in art or when they write descriptively about a time when they faced a challenge.

The majority of pupils make strong progress in their Welsh lessons. They pronounce words and short phrases clearly, retrieve information from different texts effectively, and provide suitably developed verbal responses to teachers' questions. Many pupils structure their writing appropriately with a minority relying on structures provided by teachers. A few express their views clearly and write competently independently.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Consistently positive relationships between staff and pupils are a particularly strong feature of the school. Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They feel that staff know them well, take good account of their individual needs and, when required, deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Pupils are polite and courteous to staff and visitors and interact enthusiastically with adults to share their views about the school. In general, pupils develop well as confident individuals in an environment that fosters and promotes their well-being.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning, showing pride and interest in their work. Many concentrate well and engage readily in their work. A majority persevere when tackling challenging tasks. Nearly all understand the school's behaviour policy and how it helps them feel safe and be treated fairly. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site, although a very few are not considerate to staff and other pupils. They do not complete tasks and occasionally their behaviour disrupts their own learning and that of others.

Although, pupils' attendance has improved well compared to last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance, pupils eligible for free school meals do not attend as well as other pupils.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to maintain their health and well-being. Many have positive attitudes to physical activity and benefit from their involvement in the extensive extra-curricular offer and their enthusiastic participation in physical education lessons. They develop well as ethical, informed citizens and have a strong awareness of fairness and equality, supported by the student-led 'Culture Club', LGBTQ+ and anti-bullying action groups. Overall, pupils develop their confidence and physical skills well, which has a positive impact on their engagement, well-being and health.

Pupils, including those in vulnerable groups, develop their leadership skills successfully through formal roles such as digital leaders, student-led extra-curricular

provision and taking leadership roles during lessons. This develops their confidence successfully and fosters high expectations for all. The school's 'Senedd' draws together a wide range of pupil groups and forums, and has a strong influence on school life, for example in improving the learning environment, expanding the extra-curricular provision and adapting the menu in the canteen. It communicates its work and impact clearly to other pupils. As a result, pupils feel valued and listened to by the school; this has a positive impact on their well-being and helps the school improve many aspects of provision.

Teaching and learning experiences

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and are good language models. Classroom routines are very well established, and most teachers apply them consistently to promote pupils' positive engagement in lessons. These teachers have a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs, enabling them to support and encourage pupils to make good progress.

In many instances, teachers plan purposeful activities that are organised well and help pupils to make strong progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. In these lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and prepare engaging resources, considering carefully what they want pupils to learn. Their enthusiasm for their subjects inspires and engages pupils.

In a few cases, where teaching is particularly effective, teachers plan activities that are highly engaging. They provide high levels of challenge and model their expectations to pupils clearly. These teachers successfully identify and address pupils' misconceptions and use skilful questioning to probe and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

In a few lessons, teachers do not stretch or challenge pupils sufficiently. They either present pupils with undemanding tasks that keep them busy but do help them progress, or they over-scaffold tasks, which limits pupils' independent learning. In a few instances, teachers do not deal adequately with pupils' lack of engagement or off-task behaviour.

A notable strength is the way teachers circulate the classroom regularly to check for progress and offer useful guidance to pupils about how to improve. Many make suitable use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. Where written feedback is particularly useful, teachers offer pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work and provide them with valuable opportunities to do so.

The school keeps parents and carers well informed about their child's progress, for example through parents' evenings and interim and full reports. Reports to parents include concise information about their child's achievement and progress, along with helpful targets on how to improve.

The school has a clear vision for the development of the Curriculum for Wales that is underpinned by a strong focus on effective teaching. It has consulted widely with stakeholders to formulate this vision. The school has trialled different approaches and leaders have evaluated their impact regularly and rigorously to ensure that pupils are provided with the best experiences. Leaders have also maintained a strong focus

on the development of subject understanding alongside rich opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in meaningful, real-life contexts. They work well with cluster primary schools to make sure that the curriculum builds well on pupils' prior learning, and departments also collaborate with each other effectively to develop their curriculum. For example, the physical education and ICT department have created a project where pupils use pedometers, programmed in their ICT lessons to record the amount of exercise they complete in physical education lessons and then analyse this information using spreadsheets back in their ICT lessons.

At Key Stage 4, pupils benefit from having four option choices, which allow them to study a broad range of subjects. Leaders consider pupils' views carefully to ensure that as many pupils as possible can follow their chosen courses. There are suitable pathways for all pupils, with the more able being catered for well through the extensive enrichment programme and courses such as additional mathematics. The school works well with external partners to broaden the curriculum offer with vocational courses such as construction, and hair and beauty.

The formal curriculum is supported well by an extensive range of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities. This includes participation in events, competitions and curricular trips. There is an extensive range of clubs, which include 'Friends Zone', games and puzzles club, and numerous subject and sporting clubs.

Provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills is well co-ordinated. Leaders provide valuable training for staff and work in partnership with teachers to ensure that opportunities across the curriculum develop both pupils' skills and enrich their subject understanding. As a result, in most instances pupils are provided with a wide range of worthwhile opportunities to progressively develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Leaders focus sensibly on ensuring that pupils swiftly develop sufficient reading skills to be able to access the curriculum. They use a range of baseline tests, information gathered from teaching staff, and transition information to identify those pupils who require support with basic skills. These pupils benefit from tailored interventions, for example older pupils supporting younger pupils with reading and basic numeracy, that enable them to make substantial progress.

There is an effective whole-school approach to the development of pupils' appreciation of Welsh culture and heritage, which includes celebrations of events such as Diwrnod Sumai Shwmai, Dydd Miwsig Cymru, participation in the Urdd Eisteddfod and staff regularly using everyday Welsh in lessons, assemblies and registration periods.

Care, support and guidance

A highly supportive, caring and inclusive ethos pervades all aspects of life at Coedcae School. Staff place a strong emphasis on knowing every pupil well and ensuring that support is tailored carefully to meet individual needs. Positive relationships between staff, parents and pupils are fostered by the school's 'trusted adult' approach. The school uses a range of approaches to encourage pupils to express their views. As a result, most pupils feel listened to, safe and well supported.

The school has highly effective arrangements for supporting pupils during the transition from primary to secondary school, for example through a week-long 'Crucial Crew' experience. Transition arrangements between other phases are also strong, and pupils receive valuable support and guidance when making choices about their future.

A carefully planned approach to the personal development of pupils ensures that they engage positively with and benefit from the wide range of opportunities that the school offers. The comprehensive personal and social education programme is highly effective in supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through the exploration of themes such as identity, equality and diversity. This helps them to develop an understanding of both their own identity, heritage and culture and those of others. This is achieved, for example, through whole-school cultural events, thought for the week activities, and anti-racist campaigns.

The school provides an extensive selection of enrichment activities and opportunities for pupils to engage purposefully with the community. Pupils benefit from being involved in the school 'Senedd', participating in local Pride events and performing in the school choir at a local care home. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in making decisions about important aspects of school life. In addition to the school council, pupils get the chance to join other groups that have a specific focus, such as health, curriculum and anti-bullying. This helps them to play a meaningful role in school improvement.

Provision for pupils with ALN is a particular strength of the school. The ALN co-ordinator has a comprehensive overview of the needs of these pupils. The ALN team provide clear and helpful guidance to teachers and are preparing well for ALN reform. Nearly all staff have a secure understanding of these pupils' needs and support them effectively. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for ALN pupils in mainstream lessons. The 'Cyfle' nurture provision is a calm, purposeful and safe learning environment for pupils with personal and emotional difficulties. The school's highly effective use of grant funding ensures that vulnerable pupils receive a range of valuable support, for example by providing them with structured activities during lunchtime.

The school makes powerful use of an extensive range of information to monitor pupils' well-being and tailor support to individual circumstances. They provide a wide variety of interventions and make effective use of outside agencies to support pupils.

The school has established a notably strong culture of safeguarding, where pupils' well-being is at the heart of its work. Staff have a secure understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe, and child protection procedures are robust. The school responds promptly and thoroughly to any concerns and works proactively with external agencies to support pupils' well-being. This contributes to most pupils feeling safe and free from bullying.

The 'ready to learn' behaviour policy is understood well and implemented consistently by staff. This ensures that there are clear and consistent routines that have a positive impact on pupils' engagement and well-being.

The school has effective arrangements to monitor attendance and provides robust interventions to support those pupils with poor attendance. This has led to improvements in attendance, especially that of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides dynamic and resourceful leadership and is supported effectively by her senior team. She has helped the whole staff to develop a vision for the school that focuses unwaveringly on raising aspirations and supporting the achievement and well-being of all pupils. This vision is well understood by all staff and permeates all aspects of the school's work. Leaders collaborate closely and focus relentlessly on realising this vision; a strong sense of common purpose helps them to have a consistently positive impact on pupil outcomes.

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are clear, distributed equitably, matched carefully to individual strengths, and understood well by staff. They carry out their roles diligently and provide staff with a beneficial blend of support and challenge to maximise their effectiveness. In general, middle leaders understand their roles well and many are successful in securing high levels of pupil engagement and progress, and effective teaching.

The thorough and precise way that the school evaluates its provision and plans for improvement is a particular strength. Most leaders have a secure understanding of the specific strengths and areas for development in their areas of responsibility, garnered from a range of robust self-evaluation activities that focus sharply on pupil progress and well-being. This helps them to plan for improvement precisely, identify developmental needs in a timely manner and adapt provision accordingly. Leaders at all levels make good use of an extensive variety of data. This helps them to monitor pupil progress closely and put in place many timely and highly beneficial interventions. In addition, the views of pupils and well-established links with parents and the wider community are used well to evaluate and strengthen the school's work.

Governors are highly committed and well informed about the work of the school, and they provide senior leaders with helpful support and challenge. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. The headteacher and governing body monitor finances rigorously to ensure that all spending is focused on addressing national and school priorities. The school's use of grant funding to reduce the impact of deprivation on standards and well-being is a notable strength, for example in the way that it improves the attendance of vulnerable groups. In addition, leaders have been successful in fostering a strong culture of safeguarding, in which all staff have a clear understanding of their role in ensuring that pupils are happy and safe in school.

The school's arrangements for performance management are rigorous and integrate closely with its carefully planned professional learning programme. Staff benefit from an extensive range of developmental activities, including opportunities to share good practice. These activities are evaluated thoroughly, enabling leaders to ensure that they focus closely on both individual needs and addressing whole-school and departmental priorities, and have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes.

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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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 (<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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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