



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

**A report on**

**Caerau Primary School**

**Library Road  
Caerau  
Maesteg  
CF34 0PA**

**Date of inspection: May 2023**

**by**

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

## About Caerau Primary School

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Name of provider   | Caerau Primary School           |
| Local authority  | Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider   | English                         |
| Type of school   | Primary                         |
| Religious character  | *                               |
| Number of pupils on roll   | 430                             |
| Pupils of statutory school age   | 324                             |
| Number in nursery classes  | 39                              |
| 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%) | 55.7%                           |
| 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%)               | 16.0%                           |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home   | 0.0%                            |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language  | 2.8%                            |
| Date of headteacher appointment  | 01/11/2021                      |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)  | 27/01/2015                      |
| Start date of inspection   | 15/05/2023                      |

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](https://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

Caerau Primary School is an inclusive school that fosters strong relationships between adults and pupils, and supports their emotional and social needs effectively. Provision for pupils' well-being is a key priority for leaders, and teachers create calm and thoughtful learning environments. As a result, most pupils behave well and demonstrate care and support towards each other.

The specialist learning resource and observation classes help pupils to develop language, literacy, and social-emotional skills well. The Rainforest nurture class offers tailored and beneficial support to pupils facing challenges in mainstream classes. The school collaborates closely with parents, but poor attendance and notable lateness hamper the progress of too many pupils across the school.

The school has developed a curriculum that offers interesting learning experiences. It provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh history and culture and to develop their personal and social skills. However, the curriculum does not develop pupils' skills systematically enough. Added to this, the majority of teaching does not lead to effective learning. Pupils develop skills, such as their communication and digital skills, appropriately. However, their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not strong enough.

Throughout a period of instability, leaders have worked hard to provide a positive environment that supports pupils' well-being. However, the leadership team has too little impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the school. Their strategies to evaluate pupils' learning and to bring about improvements are not effective enough. While the governing body supports the school wholeheartedly and is taking steps to become more effective, it does not meet all of its responsibilities appropriately.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Establish a stable and effective leadership and teaching team
- R2 Improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills
- R3 Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality
- R4 Ensure that curriculum and assessment arrangements develop pupils' knowledge and skills systematically and progressively

## **What happens next**

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils begin school with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age, particularly their communication skills. Many pupils make suitable progress in a minority of areas of learning, such as in their speaking and their digital skills, but overall their progress not good enough. Pupils eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers. Many pupils with additional needs (ALN) and those in the local authority specialist classes make beneficial progress in a majority of areas, such as in developing their communication skills and their personal and social skills.

In nursery, many pupils join in with songs happily and mimic teachers' actions. A majority communicate simply and say a few words that reflect what is happening to them or about their learning. By Year 1, many pupils listen to adults respectfully. A majority speak confidently when sharing facts about animals with the class. In Year 3, many pupils are beginning to explain their ideas in more detail, for example when talking about the life cycle of a frog. By Year 6, many pupils listen to adults well. They speak confidently to others, including visitors to the school, about their work and their interests. For instance, pupils explain thoughtfully to others why they like particular activities and lessons. In the learning resource class, a majority of pupils initiate conversation with adults appropriately. Many answer simple questions about school, themselves and their activities happily.

When they begin at school, many pupils make slow progress in developing their early reading skills, and their understanding of letters and sounds. By Year 2, a majority of pupils read slowly and lack accuracy. They use a few strategies to read unfamiliar words, such as sounding them out letter by letter, but have few other ways to try to read unfamiliar words. A few pupils still struggle to read simple words and do not recognise words they see frequently. By Year 6, many pupils read texts suitably, but few read with fluency. A minority do not recognise when they read words incorrectly, and often do not notice when the sentence does not then make sense. A few still guess at words based on the first letters or sound. Many pupils understand and recall basic information they gather from texts, and when reading fiction they use their knowledge the story to guess how characters might be feeling. In the observation classes, pupils read for information using visual picture boards and timetables to help them make choices. In the learning resource class, many engage positively in one-to-one reading sessions. They recognise letter sounds in text and use phonic strategies to sound out simple words suitably.

By reception, a majority of pupils have begun to draw and make marks at an appropriate level with suitable control of resources, such as pencils and brushes. In Year 1, a minority of pupils write short sentences well in their reports, for instance to explain that frogs can jump. By Year 3, a majority of pupils struggle to structure a short piece of writing effectively or to write in sufficient detail independently. Their spelling and presentation are often poor. By Year 6 many pupils structure their written work suitably and use simple adjectives to enliven their work, for example when describing a character. However, few use a suitably wide vocabulary, write well at length or use more complex sentence structures. A minority still do not use capital

letters and basic punctuation properly. Overall, pupils' writing skills are not developed well enough.

A majority of pupils develop suitable Welsh language skills. By Year 1, pupils demonstrate good oracy skills and use the language patterns that they are learning confidently, for example when describing the weather. In Year 2, a majority of pupils ask and answers simple questions competently, such as asking other pupils how they are. They use sentences to describe their clothing and what they like to eat, fluently. As pupils progress through the upper part of the school, their progress is less consistent and by Year 6 a majority use a limited range of sentence patterns well. For instance, a majority of pupils describe where they live, in what type of house and who lives with them. Many pupils in the learning resource class show their understanding of a broad range of phrases by responding confidently to adults' instructions given in Welsh.

A majority of pupils make poor progress in developing their mathematics skills. In reception pupils begin to develop simple number skills, for instance when counting the number of blocks that equal the length of a clay snake. However, they often need support to do this accurately. By Year 2, a majority of pupils struggle with processes, such as basic addition. For example, they have difficulty in identifying simple number bonds. By Year 6 most pupils recognise and understand simple fractions. A minority understand the relationship between fractions and decimals. A majority of pupils use their understanding of place value to divide numbers by 10. However, pupils often complete mathematics activities with too little understanding of the underlying concepts and struggle to transfer their skills to other contexts. Pupils have too few opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum, and when they do it is often at a low level.

Many pupils develop early digital skills quickly. In reception, pupils use drawing and painting apps independently, for instance to design a shell as part of their animal topic. By Year 2, a majority log on to laptops independently and scan QR codes to locate information to complete tasks suitably. By Year 6, many create databases to record and share information helpfully, for instance recording animal facts for their nature detective topic. They create and use branching databases well when making a game to help identify different facts about animals. However, they have little understanding of areas, such as coding and spreadsheets.

Many pupils develop their creative skills well. For example, pupils in Year 1 create interesting fictional animal characters. They use their imagination and creative skills well to combine parts of animals to create their own. In Year 3, pupils work thoughtfully to create an arctic scene in the style of Monet using vibrant and vivid shades of blue.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils feel safe and secure in school and have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. They feel well cared for, helped by the warm way that staff welcome them to school in the morning. They are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem or are upset. Many pupils are polite and treat each other, adults, and visitors with respect. They understand their role in caring for each other, such as being on hand to console a friend if they are upset.

Many pupils settle quickly to tasks and work purposefully. They behave well in lessons and move around the school safely and sensibly. Many collaborate well and show respect for others when working in pairs and groups. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 compete in mathematics challenges against others sensibly. Most pupils play co-operatively, take turns and support each other well, for instance when playing games and socialising at break times. As a result of the efforts of staff to build a strong nurturing ethos, the school is generally a calm and orderly learning environment.

Many pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they know the importance of protecting their personal information and of not to share passwords with others. Many appreciate the valuable opportunities for exercise and outdoor experiences at school, recognising the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. They make the most of a range of extra-curricular activities that promote their physical well-being and social development, such as when taking part in games sessions and after-school sports clubs. Most know that eating healthy foods, such as fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet.

Pupils are developing suitably as ethical citizens. They understand the contribution they can make to their community and the world, for instance through activities such as litter picking in the local nature reserve. Pupils recognise and consider their own and other's rights beneficially, in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, older pupils consider the plight of child refugees and offer thoughtful ways that they can be helped.

Many pupils make good use of opportunities to undertake leadership roles that support the school helpfully. They take on a range of roles with enthusiasm and purpose, such as being part the School Council and the Criw Cymraeg. These allow them to contribute to decision making within the school. For example, to improve pupils' well-being, the School Council supported leaders by identifying the need for more outdoor play equipment and seating for pupils at break times. While these groups enable pupils to have influence in the school, pupils do not influence the curriculum and what and how they learn as beneficially.

When given the opportunity, pupils are beginning to review their learning appropriately. This helps them to recognise where they have made mistakes. However, a majority of pupils do not have a secure understanding of what to do to improve their work.

Although the school has worked to raise levels of attendance and reduce the number of pupils who do not arrive at school on time, too many pupils arrive at the school late and rates of attendance are too low, particularly on a Friday.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has developed a curriculum that provides pupils with a suitable range of interesting learning experiences across all areas of learning. Leaders have worked to create a curriculum that develops aspects of pupils' skills suitably, for example there is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' digital skills, and all pupils have the opportunity learn an international language. However, overall, the curriculum does

not develop pupils' knowledge and skills systematically and progressively enough as they move through the school

There is effective provision to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, for instance regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas about a variety of engaging texts. When working with adults, pupils have a few opportunities to develop their reading skills. However, when working on reading activities independently or using online reading apps, pupils do not make enough progress. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, and across the school an overuse of worksheets hinders pupils' writing development. Overall, pupils' progress in reading and writing is weak.

Currently, there is too little structure to support the teaching of mathematics skills. This lack of a strategic approach has resulted in the curriculum becoming too narrowly focused on number skills, with few opportunities to learn about other areas of mathematics, such as measure. Opportunities for pupils to apply numeracy skills across the curriculum are similarly underdeveloped.

The school has useful structures that outline the Welsh language patterns that pupils need to learn as they move through the school. There is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' oracy skills. Most teachers provide beneficial daily sessions, such as 'helpwr heddiw' session, that allow pupils the opportunity to practise a few sentence patterns. However, many teachers do not give pupils the opportunities to practise and develop their skills outside of planned Welsh lessons.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and the culture of Wales. For example, pupils study the work of, and created paintings in the style of, Welsh artists Geoff Fahey and Christopher Williams. They learn about local industries and make and taste Welsh foods. Welsh culture is developing appropriately through celebrating events such as 'Shwmae' Day and the annual Eisteddfod. There are a suitable range of learning activities that help pupils learn about festivals and celebrations around the world and in different cultures, for example Ramadan and Chinese New Year. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and experiences of other important groups, such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, and LGBT+ people.

Throughout the curriculum, there are good opportunities that support pupils to develop their personal and social skills. For example, pupils in Year 5 work together to develop board games based on dealing with emotions and on making positive decisions. This helps them to discuss their thoughts and feelings with others. Through visits and community links, most pupils have a clear understanding of issues relating to their well-being, lifestyle choices and behaviours. For example, there are planned visits from the school's police liaison officer to discuss behaviour within the community and developing tolerance for others. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe online, for example through activities such as internet safety days, and sessions on how online bullying can impact people's mental and physical health and well-being.

The school's well-kept and engaging outdoor learning areas are not used well enough to support pupils' learning. Staff use the areas positively in a few ways. For



instance, they give pupils effective opportunities to develop their physical skills on the multi-purpose play area. However, teachers do not routinely plan suitable and regular enough opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors effectively. This is especially the case for younger pupils.

All teachers know their pupils well. They engage with pupils considerately and use daily check-ins to ensure that they understand their well-being needs. This helps most pupils to settle in class and begin sessions positively. Many teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils helpfully, for example fun and pacy Welsh language games to help pupils learn basic sentence patterns.

Overall, the quality of teaching is too inconsistent. In the majority of lessons, teaching is weak, and this hampers the progress that pupils make in their learning. Where teaching is stronger, teachers explain activities appropriately and learning moves at a suitable pace. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' explanations are not clear and they spend too much time explaining how pupils should complete activities rather than focusing on developing pupils' knowledge and skills. A majority of teachers' questioning does not encourage pupils' thinking or help teachers to gauge well enough whether pupils have understood what is required of them.

A majority of learning sessions lack suitable challenge and teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are often too low. This results in many pupils making slow progress in their learning. Pupils are often expected to complete low-level activities that contribute too little to helping them make progress, for example playing spelling and number games on computers or playing in the younger classes with little or no focus. In too many cases, planned independent 'missions' and 'challenges' lack rigour and do not support pupils' learning effectively. In a few classes, pupils spend too little time on focused, purposeful activities.

Most teachers provide pupils with verbal and written feedback on their work. However, feedback is often overly positive and does not always help pupils to know how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

Overall, the school does not monitor pupils' progress well enough in order to plan the next steps in their learning as they move through the school. Pupils' ability to evaluate their own and their peers' learning is at an early stage of development and does not help to move their learning forward successfully enough. The ability of many pupils to self-correct their work is weak.

Pupil reports to parents provide appropriate and useful information in the areas of numeracy, literacy and general progress. However, information provided in other areas of learning is vague and does not identify what pupils can and cannot do clearly enough.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is a highly inclusive community. Relationships between adults and pupils are a strength of the school and staff support pupils' emotional health and social needs effectively. As a result, most pupils show care and support for each other and co-operate well together. Provision for pupils' well-being is effective and a key priority for the school. A good example of this is the Rainforest nurture class. This resource

provides strong support for pupils who sometimes find mainstream classes challenging. Teachers provide a calm, thoughtful learning environment and personalised learning programmes for pupils successfully. These learning experiences have a positive impact on their individual achievement and well-being.

Provision for pupils in the specialist learning resource and observation classes is appropriate. Planned activities enable pupils to develop their language, literacy and social and emotional skills well. Pupils receive beneficial opportunities to apply skills in real life situations, such as when planting sunflower seeds in the polytunnel. Most pupils have purposeful experiences in the school's extensive outdoor spaces that help develop their physical skills, such as running, climbing and balancing. Opportunities to extend these individual pupils' independence and social skills are a notable feature of provision and have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

There are suitable approaches to plan learning for pupils with ALN in mainstream classes. All staff recognise the importance of intervening early when pupils need extra help to learn and provide appropriate support for individuals and groups of pupils. With input from parents, teachers produce suitable individual development plans that contain realistic targets for pupils' and identify appropriate support. Teachers monitor these pupils' progress towards their goals regularly. As a result, many pupils with ALN make at least suitable progress against their own targets from their starting points.

Teachers and support staff work together closely to provide a range of purposeful intervention programmes to improve pupils' emotional well-being, their speech and language, and reading skills. These activities support targeted pupils successfully. However, the progress of a few pupils who attend these sessions is hampered by their poor attendance at school. The school works closely with parents, and has a range of beneficial links with outside agencies that they can access to support pupils' needs, such as physiotherapy specialists.

Staff promote the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, and social skills suitably. For example, through regular assemblies, pupils have beneficial opportunities to reflect on values, such as, forgiveness and compassion. Provision for pupils to develop a better understanding of diversity and equality is less well developed.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils' to be active citizens in their school and community. For instance, the Eco Committee help others learn about healthy eating by talking to pupils about the contents of their lunchboxes. Whilst in many classes, teachers ask pupils to contribute their ideas for their learning topics, teachers direct most day-to-day learning activities and there are too few opportunities for learners to influence how and what they learn.

The school promotes the importance of active lifestyles appropriately, for example through weekly sports lessons and a range of extracurricular clubs. However, a few staff do not contribute well to helping pupils to learn to be healthy, as they provide pupils with sugary foods as rewards and as for snacks in class.

The school has appropriate processes in place to monitor and to promote regular attendance, and to try to reduce the notable proportion of pupils who are persistently late. Leaders have identified well many of the main causes of absence, for instance

notably poor attendance on Friday mornings before the early finish on a Friday afternoon. However, they have yet to address all of these issues. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. For example, all staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's business and know well the processes to be followed in the event of a disclosure or allegation.

## **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher has led the school through a period of leadership and staffing turbulence and uncertainty. She has prioritised strengthening the provision for pupils' well-being and behaviour, and safeguarding. This has resulted in a secure, shared safeguarding culture, where staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe. In addition, staff manage pupils' behaviour well and most pupils feel happy and safe at school.

Leaders work well with parents well, including those from the specialist classes, and help them to support their children. Teachers engage with parents proactively and are always on hand to discuss any issues that parents may have. There are regular newsletters that keep parents well informed about events in school. As a result, parents feel valued as members of the school community.

The acting headteacher is supported by a team of seven senior leaders, including a non-teaching deputy headteacher. Leaders have job descriptions, but these do not define their specific roles and responsibilities well enough. This means that the various responsibilities that leaders share are not clear. As a result, the lines of accountability are blurred, and leaders have too little impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

The governing body is extremely supportive of the school. Governors welcome leaders' work to strengthen safeguarding and promote pupils' and staff well-being. Governors meet a majority of their statutory requirements. For example, they create an annual report to parents. However, there is not yet a full complement of statutory and other necessary policies, and there is no systematic review process for the policies that exist. In addition, they do not ensure that the school meets the Welsh Government's healthy eating and drinking requirements during school session times.

The acting headteacher has worked with the governing body to strengthen their roles, for example to involve them in looking at pupils' work. Governors have begun to visit the school and develop a better first-hand knowledge of what is working well. However, this work is at an early stage and, over time, governors have not challenged the school's leaders or held them to account well enough. For example, they have not questioned leaders robustly about strategic decisions, such as ending school early on Friday afternoon. This decision has had a notable impact on pupils' poor attendance. Governors and leaders now recognise the need to reconsider this decision carefully.

There is a high proportion of temporary staff at the school as a result of an extended period of staffing turmoil. Across the school, the quality of teaching is too inconsistent and, in too many classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Leaders have not taken the appropriate actions to ensure that all teachers deliver consistently good classroom practice that moves pupils' learning

forward over time. For example, while there are suitable, generic targets for the performance management of senior leaders, teachers and learning support staff, evaluations of teaching to support these processes have not taken place during the past two years and leaders' monitoring does not focus well enough on learners' progress and outcomes.

Senior leaders monitor areas of the school's provision each half term, and this work forms the basis of the school's self-evaluation. The monitoring schedule includes a suitable breadth of activity, such as looking at pupils' books, learning walks and discussions with pupils. However, across both the mainstream school and the specialist classes, these procedures lack rigour and do not focus well enough on pupils' knowledge and skills, and the progress that they make. Following their monitoring, leaders consider strategies that they can put in place to make improvements at the school. However, these does not focus well enough on improving pupils' learning. Overall, self-evaluation and improvement processes are not effective enough.

The pupil development grant funding is allocated suitably, for instance to support the well-being, and the speech and language development, of disadvantaged pupils. However, the targets within the spending plan are not focused clearly enough. This means that leaders cannot evaluate whether the expenditure improves outcomes for those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement.

Leaders evaluate pupils' skills on entry to school and identify that these are often low, particularly for those pupils whose backgrounds may make them vulnerable to underachievement. Currently, leaders track what teachers have taught their pupils and consider appropriately outcomes from a few processes, such as purchased reading tests and national assessments. However, leaders' monitoring does not provide sufficient information about pupils' learning and progress during time at the school.

Leaders provide a few appropriate professional learning opportunities for staff. For example, recent professional learning strategies have supported the provision for teaching Welsh language and physical education. Staff from the specialist classes share their expertise, for example to support their colleagues to manage pupils' behaviour. However, there has been insufficient focus on improving classroom practice to ensure that all pupils make the progress they could.

## 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](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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Publication date: 26/06/2023