



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

A report on

Ysgol y Cribarth

**School Road
Abercrave
SA9 1XD**

Date of inspection: July 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol y Cribarth

Name of provider	Ysgol y Cribarth
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	135
Pupils of statutory school age	99
Number in nursery classes	20
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%)	30.2%
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%)	11.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	5.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	24/03/2015
Start date of inspection	03/07/2023

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

Ysgol y Cribarth is a highly supportive and happy learning environment that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils. In their time at the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and an understanding of the importance of respecting others. Nearly all pupils feel safe and enjoy being at school. From varied starting points when they first join the school, many pupils build a range of skills and strategies that enables them to progress well and demonstrate effective skills in different areas, such as their digital and social skills.

Leaders and staff know pupils well and use this information to ensure that all pupils are cared for. They maintain close links with parents, and this helps to create a harmonious community ethos at the school. The headteacher builds and sustains an inclusive school community. The positive relationships between pupils and staff encourage all pupils to show a responsible attitude in lessons and demonstrate excellent behaviour around the school. Pupils show high levels of interest in their lessons and enjoy the many authentic activities in which they participate.

The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning experiences. This includes a wide choice of exciting extra-curricular activities and a variety of educational visits, which are used to enrich the curriculum. Many staff use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding of different areas of learning and experiences. However, teachers do not always provide pupils with activities that are matched well enough to best meet their needs or provide useful and timely feedback to support them to achieve to the best of their ability.

Senior leaders set a clear vision for the school. The school keeps its progress towards improvement goals under regular review although monitoring processes do not always result in bringing about identified improvements. Consequently, opportunities to support pupils to make progress in their skills are sometimes missed. Governors provide knowledgeable and committed support for the school. The school is at the heart of the community it serves and the governing body and leadership team, along with all staff and partners, work together well to focus on the needs of the pupils and their families.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen school improvement processes and act swiftly on areas for development
- R2 Ensure that all teachers provide useful and timely feedback to support pupils to improve their learning
- R3 Ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

A majority of pupils begin school with levels of understanding and skills at or above those expected for their age. Many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make effective progress from their individual starting points. However, a few pupils, including the more able, do not always make the progress that they are capable of, especially in writing.

Most pupils speak in extended phrases and sentences to express themselves well. They listen attentively to the teacher and each other when working collaboratively. Many younger pupils communicate their ideas clearly to adults and each other, for example when using blocks to build a plane. As they progress through the school, most pupils' language skills and confidence develop and older pupils use subject specific vocabulary accurately. For example, pupils in Year 6 evaluate their dance performances well when focusing on co-ordination, creativity and technique.

Most pupils' reading skills progress well. Younger pupils develop their knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds effectively. As they move through the school, pupils use these strategies successfully to read unfamiliar words and retell events and discuss characters from the texts they read. Older pupils generally read at a good pace and use punctuation, and many develop fluency and expression. They express their enjoyment of reading enthusiastically and discuss their favourite authors and genres well.

Many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Most younger pupils develop their writing skills in a variety of interesting contexts. In Years 3 and 4, many pupils write at greater length when writing setting descriptions for their stories. They spell familiar words well and punctuate their work using capital letters and full stops with increasing accuracy. Older pupils produce a few pieces of writing that are at length and a minority consider the language they will use, for example when writing letters to King Edward to dissuade him from invading Wales. Many older pupils spell familiar words correctly. In general, pupils do not develop writing pieces that are engaging, with vocabulary choices that are made for effect, or use extended punctuation.

Overall, pupils' handwriting skills develop suitably. Younger pupils make marks and, by the time they are in Year 6, a majority of pupils write their letters correctly and a minority join their handwriting and present their work with pride. However, too many pupils do not form their letters accurately or present their work with care.

Many pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and skills, especially in their work using number, and a majority use these in their learning across the curriculum.

While in the role play area, pupils in the reception class use coins to buy ice creams, for example. Year 1 pupils confidently add and subtract to the value of ten. They learn about multiplication as repeated addition. As pupils' skills develop, they calculate what items they can buy for a pirate party with £1 to spend with increasing confidence. In Years 4 and 5, most pupils apply their multiplication skills independently to calculate the measures of ingredients needed for a medieval banquet by multiplying amounts by ten, twenty or twenty-five. Older pupils make sound progress. For example, they accurately calculate averages of varying heart rates after different types of exercise when investigating their heart rates. However, too many pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their numeracy skills.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about the Welsh language and use the basic vocabulary and language patterns they have learnt to communicate. Younger pupils respond well to every day Welsh instructions and many older pupils greet adults and respond to adults using familiar Welsh language patterns. Nearly all pupils who attend the Welsh pilot immersion class enter school with low baselines in their use of Welsh. Most pupils develop increasing confidence and competence in speaking Welsh, and apply these skills purposefully across the curriculum with growing confidence.

Most pupils develop a beneficial range of digital skills during their time at school. Younger pupils drag and drop three dimensional images into a digital frame, for example. As they move through the school, pupils learn a wide range of skills effectively, such as how to create spreadsheets and codes. Many older pupils program a device successfully using variables and algorithms to create a physical activity tracker.

Across the school, most pupils develop their physical and creative skills well. Younger pupils develop strong fine motor skills to use scissors and use mark making tools effectively. Most younger pupils sing pirate songs with enthusiasm and older pupils confidently develop their creative skills by creating musical scores using musical terminology correctly. Many Year 6 pupils, for example, participate in Welsh folk dancing enthusiastically.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' well-being is a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good levels of well-being and enjoy coming to school. They understand the importance of following the school rules and treat each other with respect. Nearly all pupils feel safe and listened to at school.

Nearly all pupils are happy in school and can manage their emotions appropriately. They feel valued and emotionally supported through the opportunities to discuss their feelings and emotions, such as daily well-being check-ins. Across the school, nearly all pupils have positive relationships with adults and each other. As a result, they engage purposefully with their learning and are confident to contribute ideas and ask for support.

Most pupils' behaviour in class and when outdoors is excellent. Classrooms are calm and pupils respond well to each other. When moving around the school, most pupils do so with care and consideration for others.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to engage with new learning opportunities and show good levels of resilience when approaching unfamiliar tasks. Pupils are keen to progress well and they respond regularly to feedback from staff. However, generally, pupils are over-reliant on teachers to inform them of how well they are doing and to provide them with their next steps in their learning.

Many pupils are increasingly becoming ethical and informed citizens. They demonstrate a growing sense of empathy and compassion towards others and their awareness of diversity and equality is developing appropriately. For example, older pupils discuss tackling negative stereotypes that are associated with refugees as part of a class assembly. Most pupils show a good awareness of the children's rights and can explain how these have an impact on their own and others' daily lives.

Most pupils identify the benefits of healthy eating and drinking and understand the impact this has on their bodies. For example, Year 1 pupils confidently explain that energy drinks contain high levels of sugar that will damage their teeth and that water is a healthier option. By the time pupils are in Year 6, most have a firm understanding how to stay safe online.

Most pupils enjoy taking part in physical activities during both lesson and break times and understand the importance of regular exercise to maintain a healthy life. Pupils actively engage with a range of strategies used to promote their fitness, such as 'Milltir y Dydd', 'Playground Pals' and 'Bronze Sports Leaders'.

Most pupils engage well with a broad range of extracurricular activities provided by the staff after school and during break times. These opportunities encourage pupils to develop an appreciation of healthy living whilst at school, and also support them to continue making healthy choices at home. For example, a very few pupils who began attending the school rock climbing sessions have since pursued the activity and gained qualifications outside of school.

Pupil voice is a strength of the school. Pupils take great pride in their elected roles and are beginning to influence improvements across the school. Many present themselves confidently whilst undertaking these roles and explain how activities in school impact on the wider community. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy through wider pupil voice activities. For example, school council members represent the school as part of the local Ystradgynlais Youth Town Council committee, where members discuss current issues affecting young people in the local area.

Good attendance is actively celebrated and incentivised through rewards and celebration, including assemblies, school newsletters and the school's website. Attendance processes, included in the local authority's pathway, as well as class-based initiatives, are having a positive impact in closing the attendance gap between those eligible for free school meals and their peers.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which they manage well to maintain effective discipline and the positive atmosphere that exists within all

classes. Staff treat all pupils with respect, which pupils reciprocate. This contributes to a calm and positive working environment, which is conducive to effective learning where pupils can take risks with their work. However, in general pupils, including the more able, are not challenged sufficiently.

Teachers' effective planning through the 'Cwricwlwm y Cribarth' provides pupils with a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that develop their skills and interests appropriately. Teachers plan learning activities that are interesting and engage pupils successfully. Generally, teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to learn in authentic contexts. For example, younger pupils investigate the habitats of mini-beasts and create bug hotels based on this information.

Staff support pupils to engage in learning effectively through enriched visits. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 visit Langland Beach where they investigate what lives in the rock pools. Trips to Y Bannau Brycheiniog by older pupils support them in developing resilience, collaboration and problem-solving skills in real-life situations. As a result, pupils engage well and are eager to enjoy their learning.

Teachers successfully deploy support staff to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. They share learning objectives with pupils and, at times, activate pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers and support staff are good language role models and many use questioning effectively to extend pupils' responses and deepen their understanding. In the best examples, the quality of teachers' lesson introductions and questioning is effective. Overall, teachers' feedback is too varied, resulting in missing opportunities to challenge pupils' thinking and learning. On occasion, teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their learning against success criteria. However, this is inconsistent across the school. Teachers provide pupils with verbal and, on occasion, written feedback. In general, teachers' feedback is not specific and timely enough and does not support pupils to improve the quality of their work sufficiently.

Teachers create stimulating indoor learning environments, which are beneficial to pupils' learning. However, the outdoor environment is underdeveloped and not used purposefully enough. This restricts the opportunities for pupils to improve their skills through a broad range of learning experiences.

Teachers' planning to develop pupils' listening, speaking and reading skills is successful. Teachers develop pupils' writing skills appropriately. However, across the school, not all teachers provide enough challenge or plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to improve their extended writing skills. Provision for mathematics is comprehensive. However, teachers do not consistently plan for pupils to apply their numeracy skills consistently across the school.

Provision for Welsh is a strength of the school. Staff in the Welsh immersion class show a high level of commitment and enthusiasm to ensure that all pupils are offered a wide range of stimulating experiences within a supportive and inclusive environment. This supports pupils to succeed in their learning through the medium of Welsh. This ethos is having a very positive impact on nearly all pupils' attitudes and their development within the immersion class. Across the school, nearly all staff regularly model and use a wide range of Welsh sentence patterns in the classroom to instruct and question the pupils. Teachers also provide useful enrichment programmes to further develop pupils' Welsh oracy skills.

Staff work closely with outside agencies and colleagues in the cluster, including the feeder high school. These collaborations ensure consistency of approach in planning the curriculum, as well as exploiting training opportunities. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and engaged learners. For example, older pupils develop a range of different skills, such as filming, editing and learning how to create their own app when working with a media company.

School staff monitor pupils' progress carefully. Teachers meet with senior leaders each term to discuss the progress each pupil is making. Pupils identified as making insufficient progress are provided with additional support.

Care, support and guidance

Staff and pupils show a high level of care and respect for each other, which contributes to the nurturing learning community that the school provides. The school's inclusive ethos and vision ensures that all pupils have regular opportunities to participate fully in the life of the school.

The school's approaches to promoting positive behaviour are successful. Staff are effective role models who have high expectations of pupils and set clear boundaries that pupils understand and respect. The school provides good support for pupils' mental health and well-being. For example, staff utilise a range of interventions and counselling programmes to ensure that pupils with low self-esteem progress well.

Teachers plan a range of opportunities for pupils that promote their awareness of local heritage and Welsh culture, and this is celebrated successfully throughout the school. For example, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to create a school mural depicting the heritage of the local villages that make up the school community. The school is beginning to engage pupils in learning about aspects relating to wider cultural diversity, but this work is at an early stage.

School staff plan opportunities for pupils to develop purposeful links with their local community, which pupils engage with well. The school organises a range of events in partnership with the community that reinforce pupils' sense of belonging. Teachers support pupils to understand the importance of how they relate to their local community and, as a result, develop empathy and compassion. For example, as part of Remembrance Day services, staff arrange for pupils to participate in the roll call of local fallen soldiers. Staff provide pupils with opportunities to expand their understanding of democracy through their participation in pupil voice activities.

Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities to explore different spiritual beliefs and values, and to reflect on the characteristics of key religious figures. For instance, as part of their topic 'Champions', older pupils identify and explain how the quality of 'sacrifice' is demonstrated in the life and actions of Jesus.

Across the school, teachers provide pupils with a range of purposeful and authentic activities to develop and participate with the creative arts. Pupils engage well with these activities, which foster their self-confidence and expressive skills. For example, Year 3 pupils have opportunities to perform as part of a school brass instrument performance, attended by pupils, staff and parents.

The school promotes a culture of inclusivity and puts in place support to ensure that all pupils make progress. The school has effective approaches for supporting pupils with ALN in the classroom. Teaching assistants deliver support programmes that focus on the bespoke needs of individual pupils. Pupil support plans are used to provide specific targets for individuals, and outline the interventions required to progress identified pupils in their learning. These are developed in collaboration with pupils, staff and parents to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. The school's provision for tracking and monitoring the impact of extra support on pupil progress is beginning to develop.

Staff effectively identify and support pupils with ALN across the school. Where appropriate, the school liaises well with external specialist agencies to further assist pupils and their families. Strong links have been made with local cluster schools, including establishing a regular additional learning needs co-ordinator forum group, which provides mutual support for colleagues.

The school provides a safe and secure environment for pupils. There is a positive culture of safeguarding where the well-being of the whole school community is a priority. The headteacher tracks and monitors pupil attendance robustly. As a result, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, attend school more regularly following the pandemic.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is instrumental in creating a warm and welcoming community, which has pupil well-being at its heart. He provides compassionate and considerate leadership and ensures that all staff focus on creating a caring and inclusive community, where all pupils and adults feel valued. He and the deputy headteacher consistently model behaviours and values, such as respect, kindness and responsibility. As a result, relationships throughout the school are very positive.

Leaders engage well with all stakeholders to share the school's vision, 'Enjoy, Explore, Achieve,' which ensures that the school's relationships with parents, governors and the community are strong. Communication with parents is effective and ensures that they can raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and well-being.

The school has good self-evaluation processes in place to monitor teaching, pupil progress and school improvement. There is a planned calendar of monitoring activities that identifies suitably what the school does well and which areas require development. However, leaders do not implement quickly enough the necessary changes to bring about school wide improvements. As a result, pupils do not always make rapid enough progress in their learning.

The senior leadership team, together with staff, hold regular meetings to discuss the progress of all pupils including those with ALN. They use tracking information appropriately to help them identify pupils who would benefit from additional academic or well-being support. This is put in place promptly and ensures that pupils make progress against their individual targets.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the school's life and work. They undertake their duties conscientiously and support the headteacher well in their role as critical friends. Governors are knowledgeable of national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales, ALN reform, safeguarding and the impact of poverty on the lives of parents and pupils within their own community. They use their expertise appropriately to support aspects of the school's work. For example, they monitor finances effectively. This includes the pupil development grant, which the school uses effectively to support pupils eligible for free school meals.

The headteacher's reports ensure that governors have an appropriate knowledge of the school's performance. Governors also gather their own information and contribute suitably to the self-evaluation processes, taking part in learning walks, listening to learners, scrutinising pupils' work and leading professional dialogue with curriculum leaders.

The headteacher has created a positive culture, which effectively promotes and supports the professional learning of all staff. There is a focus on staff training, which is linked clearly to the school's improvement priorities and the professional needs of staff. Teaching assistants have received training in a variety of interventions to better support the literacy, numeracy and well-being needs of individual pupils. Although all staff understand and discharge their teaching and curriculum duties well, leadership activities are not shared proportionately, resulting in an uneven distribution of responsibilities.

The area of the school grounds, 'Y Gwylt', is used purposefully by pupils to develop a range of learning skills. However, outdoor areas that link to each classroom are not well resourced. As a result, their use in promoting pupils' learning is underdeveloped as is often not specific or suitable to learning outdoors.

School leaders have worked purposefully to prepare for the implementation of a Welsh-medium class. There has been an effective and sustained focus on developing bilingualism and the Welsh culture within the school in readiness for this.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

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

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

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

Copies of the report

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

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

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

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 05/09/2023