



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

A report on

Stepaside C.P. School

**Carmarthen Road
Kilgetty
Pembrokeshire
SA68 0UG**

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

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

About Stepside C.P. School

Name of provider	Stepside C.P. School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	116
Pupils of statutory school age	91
Number in nursery classes	11
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 23.7%)	23.0%
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 13.2%)	4.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	10.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	19/04/2016
Start date of inspection	24/06/2024
Around 30% of pupils come from the local Gypsy Traveller community	

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

Stepside C.P. school is a happy place where pupils feel safe and are eager to learn. Leaders focus on providing a welcoming, calm and purposeful learning environment and this contributes to the school's nurturing ethos. Staff make good use of the extensive outdoor areas to enhance the curriculum and to provide opportunities for pupils to keep fit and healthy.

Most pupils make good progress in their learning, although those who do not attend regularly do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Over the past few years, teachers have worked diligently to develop a suitable curriculum in line with the requirements of Curriculum for Wales. This work has been effective, and the curriculum is broad and balanced and takes good account of the school's locality. The work to ensure that there is suitable progression across all areas of learning is at an early stage of development.

Teachers and support staff develop positive working relationships with pupils. They extend pupils' learning through effective questioning and provide good quality feedback to pupils as they work. Systems for pupils to assess their work are developing appropriately. When pupils work independently, the level of challenge is not always matched well enough to their ability or stage of development.

Pupils have good opportunities to take on lead roles and to influence the life and work of the school. They take these roles seriously and are proud of their achievements.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and shares this effectively with staff, pupils and parents. He has high expectations of staff and pupils and has implemented a range of changes to improve teaching and learning effectively. Governors provide a good level of support and challenge to the school and are actively involved in monitoring activities and bringing about improvements.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop a shared understanding of progression to ensure that pupils make progress across all areas of the curriculum
- R2 Ensure that independent learning experiences provide sufficient challenge for all pupils and support them to develop suitably as independent learners

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at the school, many pupils make good progress in their knowledge and skills from their starting points. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress against their targets. Pupils who do not attend regularly do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

Many pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills, often from low starting points. Most pupils listen respectfully to adults and each other. Most speak confidently and are eager to talk to visitors about their work and younger pupils engage adults enthusiastically in their role play. Pupils develop a wide and interesting vocabulary, which many younger pupils use to good effect when retelling stories. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils speak confidently and articulately to make presentations and to explain their thinking when solving problems.

Most pupils develop effective reading skills during their time at the school. A few reception pupils are beginning to use their phonetic knowledge to read short sentences. As they move through the school pupils increasingly read with fluency and expression and discuss their preferences for different text types. Older pupils use skimming and scanning effectively to find information. They make suitable predictions and summarise and infer information from texts effectively.

From an early age, many pupils make a good start at developing their writing skills. Nursery pupils enjoy the mark making process and are beginning to understand that these marks can have meaning. In Reception, pupils are keen to write short sentences with capital letters and full stops. Many form letters correctly and make good attempts at spelling words that they can sound out. As they progress through the school, pupils develop a solid understanding of the conventions of different text types and use these well to communicate with their audience. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 include suitable detail when writing a well-planned letter to invite their parents to a school event. Many older pupils write at length using a well-chosen vocabulary that helps to engage the interest of the reader. They generally punctuate their work accurately and respond to feedback from the teacher positively to ensure that their writing is accurate and meets the required brief. Many pupils present their work neatly.

Younger pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In Reception and Year 1 pupils spontaneously use Welsh in their play and when asking for items. In Years 2 and 3, many pupils answer a range of questions about themselves with confidence. Older pupils generally have a suitable understanding of simple language patterns, but they lack confidence in extending their answers to engage in lengthier conversations. The Cwiw Cymraeg work hard to promote Welsh across the school and are confident to lead whole school Welsh assemblies independently.

Overall, pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In Reception, most pupils use a number line confidently to work with numbers within ten. As pupils move through the school, they develop an appropriate range of mathematical skills for their age and

ability. For example, in Year 2, pupils use their numeracy skills to double amounts of ingredients when preparing to make cakes for a school sale. Older pupils use a wide range of methods competently during mental mathematics sessions. They recall previous learning well and describe their thinking and reasoning clearly. Many pupils apply their mathematical skills appropriately to problem-solving activities and make good use of their knowledge of data handling in work across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop appropriate digital skills. They use a wide range of software purposefully to apply their digital skills across the curriculum. For example, from Year 2 onwards, pupils use spreadsheets to support them to make simple calculations. In Years 4 and 5, pupils use an app to design a GIF linked to the school's vision. Nearly all understand how to stay safe online and know what to do if they experience any cyberbullying.

Across the school, most pupils develop their physical skills well. For example, pupils in Reception and Year 1 run and jump with increasing control when practising a range of sporting activities, such as dribbling a football, jumping over obstacles, riding tricycles and balancing on logs. Older pupils apply their knowledge of a range of sports to practise fielding skills and to modify and improve their performance in athletics over time.

Pupils develop a range of effective creative skills. For example, younger pupils paint and decorate gingerbread houses enthusiastically and create informative posters to advertise a cake sale. When producing artwork, older pupils follow a design process and refine their work as it progresses. Pupils enjoy opportunities to create music using a range of instruments, such as a ukelele, pbuzz and pcoronet. In Years 4 and 5, pupils creatively plan lessons that they deliver to the class. Amongst others, these have included topics such as the culture of Wales, writing short stories, and designing games and challenges in physical education.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and feel happy in its caring, nurturing environment. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they need help. Most have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online, including how to keep their personal information confidential. Many pupils attend school regularly and punctually. However, the attendance of a few pupils gives cause for concern.

Most pupils behave well. They are considerate of their peers and respond maturely when their friends need support. They have a thorough understanding of why the school rules and values are important and take good account of them in their interaction with others.

Across the school, most pupils are ready to learn. They pay attention to adults and each other and concentrate on their work for sustained periods. Younger pupils develop increasing independence by participating in hands-on experiences and have a positive approach to problem solving. For example, when using objects to measure the distance to the gingerbread house they work out what to do when they run out of objects. As they move through the school, most pupils develop increasing confidence, concentrate for extended periods and many persevere with tasks when they find them challenging.

The school's focus on providing timely and purposeful feedback to pupils is beginning to have a positive impact on how they improve the quality of their work. Most pupils adapt and correct their work and can give reasons to support the changes they make.

Most pupils have a thorough understanding of the importance of equality and demonstrate respect for others and their views. Through studying a variety of cultures and religions, older pupils reflect on and discuss the influence of different figures in society. For example, they consider the impact of the work of Martin Luther King during Black History Month. Most pupils are developing an awareness of children's rights. They are aware of the importance of sustainability and actively consider ways to minimise the effects of the actions of humans on the environment.

Pupils take great pride in supporting others through their elected roles across several pupil voice groups. They influence improvements and decisions purposefully across the school. For example, members of the Criw Cymraeg promote the use of the Welsh language by awarding the Welsh speaker of the week, and regularly introduce new Welsh phrases in school assemblies. Pupils suggest imaginative ideas during their leadership group meetings and feel that staff listen to their views and act upon them. Pupils take responsibility for noting the agreed actions of each group and keep clear records of meetings.

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how a healthy diet, regular physical activity and looking after their mental health impact on their quality of life. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills during lessons, break times and extra-curricular activities. For example, all classes participate in well-being sessions and visit the Peace Garden on the school grounds for mindfulness and outdoor activities.

Many pupils benefit from attending the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils describe how these opportunities help them to develop skills around their interests, increase their enjoyment of school and enhance their well-being.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders have a clear vision for the curriculum that they communicate well to staff and pupils. They base this around the Global Goals to address issues such as inequality, poverty and climate change. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all learners. Staff plan learning experiences that reflect the school's locality and its place in modern-day Wales. Adults choose the topics that each class covers, but teachers also ensure appropriate opportunities to include the ideas of pupils in their planning. Currently, teachers are considering with other local schools how they can ensure that the school's curriculum includes suitable progression of skills for all learners. This work is at an early stage of development.

There are good opportunities to reflect the local and wider Wales contexts of the school. For example, the Eco Club has considered how car emissions affect the air quality outside the school. They have asked parents to switch off their engines when they collect pupils and are monitoring the situation. Pupils visited the Senedd to receive a Climate Challenge Cymru award following their work in this area.

A range of visits is used effectively to enhance the curriculum, such as visits to local castles, beaches, environment centres and woodlands. Older pupils take part in a range of residential visits including to the Urdd centres at Cardiff Bay and Llangrannog. Visitors to the school develop pupils' understanding of the world of work effectively and there are useful opportunities for pupils to develop entrepreneurial skills. For example, pupils visit a local supermarket to cost the ingredients and consider how to make a profit when making healthy cakes for sale.

Teachers make good use of the extensive school grounds to provide good quality outdoor learning experiences. Over the past few years, they have adapted learning areas, particularly for younger pupils, to provide more hands-on and active learning experiences. These changes have provided pupils with greater autonomy in their learning and supported them to develop their investigative and physical skills effectively.

Adults promote the development of pupils' oracy skills well in English. They generally model language well and develop pupils' vocabulary, using subject-specific words linked to the topic. Teachers identified that pupils' skills and confidence in using Welsh diminished following the pandemic and have introduced a structured programme to improve pupils' skills and help them to regain confidence in using Welsh. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly for younger pupils. Leaders and governors are eager to promote enjoyment in reading and a love of books. This work is progressing well, and pupils enjoy regular story time and using the new library facilities.

Teachers develop pupils' mathematical skills effectively through a structured programme that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills and provides useful opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to problem solving. More recently, there has been a focus on developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum with a specific emphasis on the use of data handling skills. This work has been effective, but overall, there are too few opportunities for older pupils to apply their numeracy skills in meaningful contexts.

Teachers promote pupils' digital skills well. They encourage pupils to use a wide range of apps and programmes to support their learning. When they plan learning experiences, they consider the opportunities for pupils to enhance their work digitally. As a result, pupils make suitable progress in developing a range of digital skills. They ensure that pupils receive relevant and regular information about how to stay safe online.

Teachers and support staff develop strong and supportive working relationships with pupils. They create a calm and purposeful learning environment and establish effective classroom routines that ensure that pupils are aware of their expectations of them and engage effectively in their learning. The pace of learning is generally appropriate and sustains the interest of pupils. In most instances, when pupils work with an adult, there is a suitable level of challenge. Staff support pupils well through careful questioning and useful and timely verbal feedback to help them to achieve the learning objectives. However, when pupils work independently there are not always high enough expectations of what they can achieve, and the provision of resources is not always matched well enough to their stage of development.

This year the school has been developing strategies for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers. Teachers are trialling different approaches and pupils explain clearly what they like and which methods are working well for them. The most successful methods help pupils to assess their work against the success criteria and to indicate which aspects they have completed well and which they feel they still need to improve.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a nurturing and caring environment where staff and pupils show mutual respect, ensuring that all members of the community feel valued. Provision to support pupils' emotional health and well-being is effective. Where needed, staff plan additional support for pupils to strengthen their emotional resilience. There are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their well-being across the school. Staff create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for pupils to communicate their emotions and feelings. Staff manage pupils' behaviour successfully by using positive behaviour strategies and most pupils behave well in class and around the school.

Establishing strong links with families is a priority for staff. Parents have valuable opportunities to work alongside pupils on Family Fridays and these events are well attended. An example of this is when the youngest pupils planned and held a pampering session for Mother's Day which included treatments such as neck massages and nail painting.

The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) works successfully with the teaching team to identify the needs of individual pupils at an early stage and to implement plans that are tailored for them. The planned provision meets pupils' needs well and improves their learning, social and emotional skills. The ALNCo tracks the progress of pupils against their individual targets and makes good use of support from external agencies to ensure that they receive specialist additional support when required.

Leaders hold useful progress meetings to identify pupils' individual needs and plan how to support their well-being and learning. They examine the progress of groups of pupils carefully and act on any trends or patterns of underperformance. The school's arrangements for supporting pupils, including those with ALN, are effective and well organised.

Throughout the school, staff provide good opportunities for pupils to understand the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. There is a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities and many opportunities for pupils to be physically active at playtimes. For example, older pupils make good use of the multi-use games area and younger pupils have access to a range of equipment such as tricycles and areas where they can practise balancing. Lessons reinforce the importance of healthy eating and develop pupils' understanding of a balanced diet.

The school places a strong emphasis on inclusion for all. Staff encourage pupils to challenge stereotypes and celebrate individual differences. Pupils explore a range of cultures and religions and have good links with the local church. This helps them to develop an understanding of spirituality and respect for the beliefs of others.

There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles across the school in a range of areas. Governors and staff have discussed with reading ambassadors how to promote a love of reading and encourage pupils to read for pleasure. The school council has been encouraged to think about imaginative ways to promote better attendance. Digital leaders collect data to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies that have been introduced.

Many pupils have purposeful opportunities to take part in performances in school and the locality. This encourages participation and enjoyment in performing in front of an audience as well as raising aspirations among pupils.

The school has a robust approach to safeguarding. Leaders place a clear emphasis on ensuring the safety and well-being of all staff and pupils. Staff understand their responsibility for pupil safety well and discharge their duties diligently. The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern. There are effective processes to monitor the attendance and punctuality of all pupils. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance and work constructively with partners to provide support when needed.

Leadership and management

Together with pupils, parents and governors, the headteacher has created a shared vision based on an inclusive culture, which gives pupils the confidence to engage positively with their learning experiences. The school's core values of 'responsibility, resilience and respect' are at the heart of all it does. Leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the needs of individual pupils and the local community and strive to meet these needs effectively. They build effective partnerships between the school, its families and the wider community. Leaders and staff communicate regularly with parents and carers and provide valuable opportunities for parents to visit the school and engage in their child's learning.

Leaders use a wide range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' learning robustly. A range of suitable monitoring activities inform leaders of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. They use the findings from self-evaluation processes effectively to set the school's improvement priorities. For example, following learning walks, leaders identified the need to improve pupils' application of numeracy skills across the curriculum. Through partnership working with other schools in the locality, teachers are beginning to develop a greater understanding of each of the areas of learning in the curriculum.

The headteacher has reviewed the roles and responsibilities of all staff to ensure that they meet the needs of the school and the curriculum. Teachers take responsibility for developing areas of learning and experience as part of the school's work to design a suitable curriculum for all pupils. They explain this work to governors to ensure that there is a shared understanding of how the curriculum is developing to support learning. Across the school, staff carry out their roles effectively and they feel empowered, trusted and well supported. Staff collaborate purposefully with local schools to improve aspects of teaching, for example developing a consistent strategy for assessment for learning.

Professional learning activities develop the skills and knowledge of staff and link well with the school's priorities for improvement. For example, teachers attend training to improve their understanding of the Digital Competence Framework and use this effectively to develop pupils' digital skills across the school. There are suitable systems in place to support performance development for all staff.

The governing body acts as a strong school advocate, holds the school to account appropriately and supports leaders as a critical friend. Governors understand the needs of the community and fulfil their duties well. Regular engagement with leaders, staff and pupils provides governors with the knowledge they need to challenge and support the work of the school. For example, governors set up an attendance committee following robust monitoring of attendance data. The role of the 'link governor' for curriculum areas is effective and enables governors to strengthen their understanding of the standards achieved and quality of provision.

Governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and help to ensure that pupil leadership groups support this work effectively. Staff and governors have robust procedures for safeguarding pupils throughout the school and ensure that all staff understand and promote the school's safeguarding culture. Governors monitor the budget closely and support the headteacher well in responding to financial challenges.

Leaders work well to address national and local priorities. They have embraced additional learning needs reform well and prioritise the development of pupils' literacy skills, specifically in establishing a culture of reading for pleasure. Leaders manage the budget carefully and use grant funding effectively to support professional learning and enhance learning experiences for pupils. For example, leaders have used grant funding well to develop the school grounds. The pupil development grant is used suitably to support the needs of vulnerable pupils and those from low-income households, for example by providing intervention programmes to support pupils' well-being and making school visits more affordable.

Leaders are beginning to plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills across the school. They provide a good range of experiences to promote Welsh language and culture and empower the pupil leadership team 'Cryw Cymraeg' to lead the focus on Welsh language development.

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:

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