



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

A report on

Mary Immaculate V.R.C. School

**Merlins Terrace
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA61 1PH**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About Mary Immaculate V.R.C. School

Name of provider	Mary Immaculate V.R.C. School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	200
Pupils of statutory school age	160
Number in nursery classes	27
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%)	15.23%
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%)	13.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	12%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/11/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2014
Start date of inspection	06/03/2023

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

Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School has a wonderfully caring and nurturing ethos underpinned by strong values and virtues. There is a distinct focus on equity of opportunity for all and pupils' opinions and aspirations are at the heart of the school's activities. Staff give a high priority to ensuring pupils' well-being and they strive to ensure that all pupils' individual needs are met. Pupils enjoy school and most make good progress during their time there when compared to their starting points. The behaviour of nearly all pupils is good.

The school is well led by a dynamic and committed headteacher. She has worked with parents, staff and pupils to create a vision that is specific and appropriate to the needs of the school. The headteacher has high expectations of herself and others and works tirelessly with other leaders to improve pupil outcomes and well-being.

There is a warm, supportive and productive working relationship between teachers and pupils. Teachers plan a broad range of engaging and interesting activities across the curriculum. The pace of learning is good on the whole and most teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively to develop pupils' understanding and promote thinking skills. In general, teachers provide pupils with useful feedback that enables them to improve their work. However, feedback on written work is not always sharp and focused enough on the task-specific areas that pupils need to improve and teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to respond to their guidance. Outdoor learning for the very youngest pupils is well developed. However, where outdoor learning is less effective, activities are not suitably challenging for all pupils and do not develop pupils' skills well enough.

Pupils play a prominent role in the everyday life at the school. For example, they work dynamically in their roles as members of Y Senedd and its sub committees to discuss and improve aspects of school life for the benefit of all. Another good example is how pupils in Year 4 acquire and develop useful life skills in their roles as peer tutors as they work on developing younger peers' confidence, fluency and a love of reading during well-planned and delivered sessions.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that outdoor learning develops pupils' skills effectively and provides a suitable level of challenge for all pupils
- R2 Ensure that feedback from teachers targets the next steps in pupils' learning effectively and that pupils have regular opportunities to improve their own work

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 start at school with skills below those expected for their age, especially their communication skills. Over time, most pupils make at least the progress they should in literacy and mathematics. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals make suitable progress from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets.

Most pupils listen well and develop their oracy skills successfully over time. In nursery and reception, many listen well to adults when they ask questions or engage with other pupils in their play. By Year 6, most pupils speak confidently when asked to talk on a range of topics. They listen carefully to the contributions of others and respond using an appropriate tone of voice and subject specific vocabulary. They back up their opinions with sound reasoning.

Across the school, pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories. In general, pupils' reading skills develop well and they make good progress from their starting points. By Year 6, most pupils read at the level they should. In Year 2, pupils discuss their favourite author and types of books that they enjoy best, giving reasons for their answers. In Year 4, many pupils make good use of punctuation to aid expression. They summarise the story effectively and make thoughtful observations about the characters and the plot.

Most pupils develop their writing skills well. In reception, pupils begin to form letters accurately and to write simple words. They build on this successfully as they move through the school and use an increasing range of age-appropriate punctuation and vocabulary. More able pupils often use imaginative and vivid descriptions that bring their writing alive for the reader. Many pupils write successfully in an increasing range of genres, both in English lessons and in other areas of the curriculum. They pay good attention to the requirements of each genre. For example, pupils in Year 6 consider the question 'Did any good come from COVID-19?' and produce a detailed discussion text that reflects both sides of the argument effectively.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills well from an early age. They respond appropriately to questions from the teacher and their peers and are eager to engage visitors in conversation, asking them a range of suitable questions. They sing Welsh songs with understanding and follow a wide range of instructions in Welsh. Many older pupils understand and respond to a broad variety of language patterns in a range of tenses. For example, they explain what they would like to choose from a menu and what their friend would like to eat.

Many pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. From an early age, they develop a good understanding of numbers, size, shape and time. For example, younger pupils create visual timetables that sequence events during the day. In Year 2, many build on these skills, develop a secure understanding of place value in two-digit numbers and begin to use measures accurately. Most older pupils use a suitable range of methods competently to calculate mentally and on paper when solving problems. They describe their thinking and reasoning well. When given

the opportunity, many pupils make effective use of their numeracy skills to support their learning across the curriculum. For example, in Year 6 they analyse a range of data to compare air pollution levels in London before and during the pandemic.

Many pupils develop their digital skills suitably as they move through the school. They use a range of software confidently. For example, they employ a coding package to generate a friendship meter to indicate who is likely to be a good friend. Older pupils enter formulae confidently on spreadsheets to calculate the cost of providing aid to survivors of natural disasters. Most pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) to communicate information well, for example by making movies and presentations to share with others. Most pupils develop a strong understanding of how to stay safe online. They discuss maturely what to do if they encounter anything online that concerns them and show a sound awareness of how to keep their passwords secure.

As they move through the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their physical skills. Pupils in Year 6 use a good range of passing skills effectively. They explain confidently when it is appropriate to use different types of pass and apply their knowledge well within a game situation.

Many pupils develop their creative skills well. For example, pupils in Year 2 consider the best product to make and sell using honey when taking part in an enterprise project that involved working collaboratively with local beekeepers.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud to be part of the school's caring, nurturing and friendly environment. They feel safe and secure at school and feel that they are respected and treated fairly by staff and other pupils. As a result, most pupils enjoy school. Most pupils feel that adults listen to their views and they know who to turn to should they have any concerns or fears. Nearly all pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and they treat visitors to the school courteously. Most pupils are engaging and confident when they discuss their learning experiences and activities.

During activities, most pupils listen respectfully to the contributions of others and respond maturely. Pupils in Year 6 develop persuasive arguments surrounding sensitive issues. For example, as part of Year 6 pupils' study of the novel 'Pig Heart Boy', they effectively discuss the dilemma of which individuals should be chosen to receive transplant organs based on their age and lifestyles.

Most pupils enjoy their lessons, are enthusiastic about their work and engage purposefully with new learning experiences and ideas. They suggest interesting ideas for what and how they would like to learn and have a strong awareness of how they can contribute to the curriculum of the school. They are developing well as resilient and independent learners, and they discuss their progress maturely with others. For example, all year groups prepare presentations for parents and visitors to share their learning and work for the term.

The behaviour of most pupils is good during class-based activities, as they move about the school, during morning assembly and outside during breaktimes. Most pupils concentrate well on their tasks and have a positive attitude to their work.

Most pupils respond well to feedback from teachers during lessons. However, when pupils produce extended pieces of writing, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and, as a result, pupils do not make useful improvements to their work often enough and move their learning forward as effectively as they could.

Nearly all pupils, including those from disadvantaged groups, enjoy opportunities to participate in leadership roles through their involvement in the numerous pupil voice groups. They undertake their roles conscientiously and confidently. They lead purposeful initiatives that have a positive impact on the life of the school, and they develop valuable leadership skills as a result. For example, the 'Super Ambassadors' work with staff to make changes to the school uniform and members of 'Y Senedd' collaborate maturely with leaders to develop the school's curriculum.

Through a programme of interesting activities, most pupils develop an understanding of the importance of being ethical citizens. During anti-bullying week, older pupils challenge stereotypes purposefully. For example, Year 6 pupils discuss the way colours should, or should not, be linked to gender. Most pupils understand the importance of rules and conventions and how they apply at school and in the wider world. Nearly all pupils engage enthusiastically in learning activities promoting the rights of the child. For example, pupils across the age range participate in an online workshop with the Commissioner for Wales about the promotion of pupils' rights. They devise challenging questions relating to the importance of children's rights around the world.

Most pupils understand the importance of making choices that affect their health and understand the importance of keeping fit. They take part in physical activities in the classroom, during break time and lunchtime, and in after-school sports clubs such as netball and football. Pupils understand that emotional well-being is important and participate purposefully in activities that promote well-being and good mental health. For example, they participate in daily well-being check-ins in class. Nearly all pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. They benefit from regular online safety sessions provided by the school and local police officers.

Teaching and learning experiences

Over time, the school has planned effectively to develop its curriculum and to ensure that it is broad and balanced. Teachers have reflected on progress towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales. They have revised their approaches to ensure that the curriculum is meaningful to pupils. Teachers plan a curriculum that develops positive attitudes to learning and ensures that pupils understand their place in modern Wales and the contribution that they can make to society. There is effective provision to develop the Welsh language skills of pupils and their understanding of Welsh traditions and culture. Staff place a strong emphasis on this aspect.

The school has taken good account of the views of parents to develop its curriculum and has included several cross-cutting themes effectively in its planning. These include relationships and sexuality education, careers and work-related experiences and children's rights. The school places a strong focus on reflecting the Catholic faith and values, and the school's locality.

Pupils have a strong voice in designing their curriculum through the school's Senedd, where each member is attached to a department that considers different aspects of the life of the school. At the start of each theme, following stimulating engagement sessions to get the pupils interested and enthused, pupils have good opportunities to talk about and suggest what they would like to learn and to guide the direction that the thematic work will take.

A wide range of trips and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum effectively. For example, when studying a theme entitled 'The Wonders of the UK', pupils invited local politicians and the mayor to the school and visited the local council's chamber to see where they hold their meetings. Teachers plan good quality opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. However, opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills in authentic contexts are more limited.

There are warm and supportive working relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know the pupils well and respond to their individual needs effectively. In general, learning proceeds at a good pace and teachers use a range of strategies effectively to help pupils to stay on task and to behave well. Most staff use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding of concepts but, on a few occasions, they over-direct pupils or spend too much time reinforcing concepts that pupils already understand, and this slows the pace of learning.

The school has developed outdoor provision successfully for its youngest pupils, but pupils in Years 1 and 2 have more limited opportunities to make effective use of the large outdoor space to enhance their learning. On occasions activities that take place in the outdoors do not develop pupils' skills successfully or provide a suitable level of challenge.

Teachers revisit prior learning effectively to remind pupils of expectations, for example around conventions for different genres of writing or how to use their mathematical skills to approach problems. Overall, teachers provide pupils with useful oral feedback about their learning and include other pupils well in evaluating their work and suggesting areas for improvement during lessons. When pupils produce extended pieces of writing, teachers' feedback is not always sharp enough to ensure that it identifies specifically what pupils need to do to improve their work. Pupils do not always act on teachers' suggestions for improvement, other than to correct spelling mistakes. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and make improvements to their work. In a few classes, teachers do not respond to pupils' specific learning needs quickly enough. For example, they continue with tasks that do not challenge pupils at an appropriate level, rather than making adjustments that will challenge pupils more suitably.

Care, support and guidance

The school supports pupils' emotional and social needs well. Staff create a warm and caring learning environment where pupils feel valued and safe. The calm atmosphere throughout the school reflects the success of this provision. The school has a consistent approach towards the management of behaviour. As a result, nearly all pupils' behaviour is good.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good and supports pupils' learning needs well. The school tracks the progress of nearly all pupils effectively and produces detailed and useful reports. Staff use assessment results well and the additional learning needs co-ordinator works purposefully with staff to plan and provide suitable intervention and support sessions. These sessions meet nearly all pupils' needs, particularly with developing their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, many pupils make good progress against their targets in many areas of learning. Pupils' individual development plans (IDP) comply with statutory requirements and are regularly reviewed. There is effective collaboration with other schools and outside agencies such as medical services, social services and police to support pupils with specific needs. Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. They provide opportunities to reflect on current affairs and other religions during assemblies and class activities. There are good links with the parish, pupils regularly visit the church and take an active part in leading the Mass. Pupils have appropriate, regular opportunities to discuss and reflect on their own beliefs and values as well as those of other faiths, for example when studying about Ramadan and how it is incorporated within the everyday lives of Muslims.

The school provides equitable opportunities to encourage all pupils, including pupils from vulnerable groups, to take responsibility and contribute to the life and work of the school, for example through pupil voice groups such as Y Senedd. Pupils develop a strong understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion by participating in effective sessions to discuss the challenging of stereotypes linked to gender, for example by studying the differences in salaries between elite sportsmen and sportswomen.

Teachers plan a wide variety of enriching local and residential educational visits, for example to the Urdd camp in Cardiff, Whitland Abbey and the National Botanic Gardens. Pupils work with local businesses on a real-life enterprise project to design and create a product. They develop their design, market-research and presentation skills purposefully as they collaborate throughout the processes of producing the final product from their initial ideas. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to deliver on the school's aspiration of 'not to have more but to be more' by participating in various activities to raise money for charities and people in war-affected regions, for example the NSPCC, CAFOD, Cancer Research UK and the people of the Ukraine.

Pupils have good opportunities to participate in physical and competitive activities. For example, there are after-school football and netball clubs and pupils have regularly competed successfully in inter-school football, netball and dance competitions. The school actively encourages pupils to eat healthy snacks at breaktimes and to rehydrate regularly. Through its broad curriculum, the school provides valuable lessons on how to make healthy eating choices and how to eat a balanced diet. For example, pupils have a sound understanding of what healthy packed lunches should consist of.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school where safety, empathy, care and support are at the forefront. There are robust systems in place to safeguard pupils and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies where appropriate. There are clear and effective arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality and the school collaborates effectively with other agencies to promote

good attendance. The school promotes online safety effectively and nearly all pupils show a sound understanding of how to keep safe. For example, older pupils explain clearly how they could screenshot an unwanted online message without alerting the sender. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and there are no causes for concern.

Leadership and management

Leaders have developed a clear, shared vision for the school that is underpinned by strong values and virtues. The headteacher has high expectations for staff and pupils in all aspects of school life and a commendable desire and commitment to improving pupil outcomes and well-being. Her energetic and intelligent leadership drives forward improvements in standards. For example, work to address pupil behaviour has resulted in a significant improvement in this aspect over time.

Leaders are successful in addressing a range of national priorities. For example, the school is making suitable progress in implementing their vision for the curriculum in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders ensure that pupil voice and the rights of the pupil are at the heart of the curriculum and they provide effective opportunities for pupils to influence the school's development. The curriculum focuses on developing skills across the areas of learning and experience through a broad range of learning activities. Leaders ensure that pupils have effective opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills and to nurture and develop their understanding of the significance of Welsh culture and heritage.

Leaders have made good progress towards reforming additional learning needs provision in line with legislative changes. Staff monitor pupils' progress closely and put effective and timely interventions in place where necessary. Consequently, pupils with ALN make good progress from their starting points. Resources are used purposefully to tackle the effects of poverty and social disadvantage on pupil outcomes and well-being.

Leaders, staff and pupils use a suitable range of first-hand evidence to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. In general, evaluation of these monitoring activities results in the development of useful action plans to address these areas. However, the focus of a few monitoring activities is too broad and not sufficiently focused on the impact of teaching on pupil outcomes. As a result, the school's improvement plans do not fully take into account some important areas for development.

Leaders work effectively with parents to develop their ability to support their children with their schoolwork. Parents have contributed to the school's vision by making very useful suggestions as to what they would like education to look like at Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School, for example an aspiration for a school that develops pupils to be emotionally equipped to deal with life and its challenges and opportunities.

The school places great value in ensuring that all staff have access to a wide range of professional learning activities. These have a clear link to the school's self-evaluation findings, improvement priorities and staff performance management. Professional learning has a consistent focus on facilitating pupil progress and well-

being. Best practice is recognised purposefully within the school and shared effectively with staff, for example through the school's innovative professional learning website. The school evaluates the effect of professional learning on pupil outcomes effectively. For example, staff evaluate the impact of their colleagues' professional learning related to developing pupils' oracy skills and this evaluation is purposefully validated by the regional partnership. Pupils in Year 4 reflect maturely and accurately upon their work as peer tutors in developing younger pupils' reading skills.

The governing body are very supportive of the school and take their roles as critical friends seriously. They work well alongside leaders and their working relationship is characterised by a strong sense of purpose, transparency and trust. In general, governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well and are aware of the progress that the school makes in relation to its improvement priorities. Overall, the governing body supports the school suitably in managing financial resources, for example in planning to deal with budgetary challenges. However, the governing body do not have a sufficient knowledge of how the school uses the pupil development grant. As a result, they are not aware of the impact that the provision funded by this grant has on supporting the needs of disadvantaged learners. Governors support the school purposefully in ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

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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