



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

A report on

All Saints R.C. Primary School

**Heol yr Ysgol
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6QP**

Date of inspection: April 2024

by

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

About All Saints R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	All Saints R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	216
Pupils of statutory school age	178
Number in nursery classes	38
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%)	44.2%
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 13.2%)	17.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	14/03/2016
Start date of inspection	29/04/2024

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

The staff at All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School create a warm, friendly and inclusive environment with the pupils' well-being at its heart. Nearly all pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They show respect to all staff and visitors and show concern for each other. Pupils' behaviour across the school is very good.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and when given the opportunity, contribute well to what and how they learn.

Teachers are beginning to develop a curriculum in line with the principles of Curriculum for `Wales and engage pupils well in their learning. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low and over-direction from adults impacts on pupils' ability to develop as independent learners. Although staff praise pupils for their achievements, written feedback does not help pupils improve their work well enough.

From low starting points, many pupils develop their speaking and listening skills effectively. They have a sound understanding of number and they are beginning to apply their numeracy and digital skills to other areas of learning. However, pupils' ability to write at length is less well developed.

Overall, the headteacher, staff and governors have a good understanding of many of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, their ability to identify the most important area for improvement, such as the quality of the curriculum, is not effective enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures in order to address the most important areas for improvement
- R2 Ensure that the curriculum builds systematically and coherently and allows pupils to make choices in how and what they learn in order to develop their skills as independent learners
- R3 Ensure that teaching consistently provides appropriate challenge and feedback from staff helps pupils improve their work

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills at a level below that expected for their age. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals and from low income households, make sound progress from their starting points.

The youngest pupils settle into school life quickly and engage successfully in the range of experiences the school provides. Nearly all Nursery and Reception pupils develop their speaking and listening skills rapidly. For example, they describe the life cycle of a butterfly using vocabulary such as, 'cocoon'. By the time they reach Year 2, many pupils listen attentively to each other and communicate their thoughts clearly. As they progress through the school, many pupils become increasingly articulate. The majority of older pupils discuss their work with growing confidence, for example when explaining the effect of makeup on the skin.

As they move through the school, the majority of pupils develop their reading skills effectively. Younger pupils use their phonic skills well and are happy to tackle unfamiliar words using a range of strategies. Many older pupils read with increased fluency and good expression. They use skills, such as inference and prediction, well and show a suitable understanding of what they have read. They apply their reading skills effectively to support their learning in different areas, for example when undertaking research into their pop-up museum, and discuss why they prefer reading a variety of books with increasing maturity.

Most younger pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. They begin to record their learning through mark making, forming legible letters and writing simple words. By Year 2, many pupils start to write in short sentences using capital letters and full stops appropriately, such as when they write a story inspired by their class book. Many older pupils develop their writing skills suitably across a range of genres. Their spelling is generally accurate and they are beginning to use appropriate punctuation and more complex sentence structures. However, there are few opportunities to develop their extended writing skills and, as a result, they do not always apply these skills across the curriculum frequently enough. A minority of pupils do not present their work with appropriate care.

Younger pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills and use their knowledge to solve simple problems. For example, in Year 1, pupils use money in their role play area to purchase items from the 'deli'. Most older pupils use a range of approaches to calculate totals and plot coordinates in the four quadrants to reflect the positions of countries on a map of the world. As they move through the school, a majority of pupils improve their understanding of number well. Older pupils use their mathematical knowledge in other areas of learning, such as when calculating profit margins as part of their 'Dragon's Den' topic.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh and many pupils make appropriate progress. Most younger pupils respond to simple instructions effectively and join in with a range of Welsh songs. The majority of older pupils hold simple

conversations with developing independence, such as talking about their likes and dislikes using appropriate Welsh language patterns and vocabulary. The Criw Cymraeg take their role seriously and are enthusiastic role models in beginning to promote the use of conversational Welsh around the school.

Across the school, many pupils make suitable progress in improving their digital skills and use these confidently to support their work in other areas. For example, Year 2 pupils develop their coding skills whilst programming a toy to navigate a map of their village. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 use simple branching databases to classify objects and the oldest pupils create multimedia presentations using a range of applications. Although older pupils are beginning to use databases, for example to interrogate data and extract information based on the amount of electricity they use throughout the year, work on spreadsheets is less well developed.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their physical skills. Younger pupils develop their strength and co-ordination through purposeful use of the outdoor climbing equipment and as a natural part of their learning, for example with ride-on toys. Most older pupils develop their physical skills appropriately in planned physical education lessons and extra-curricular clubs, such as football and basketball.

Most pupils develop their creative and expressive skills successfully. Younger pupils experiment with line, shape, tone, colour and texture. For example, pupils in Year 2 create effective collages using natural fruits and vegetables in the style of Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Older pupils study a variety of artists including Welsh artists such as Martin Evans, Rhiannon Roberts and Jeremy Thomas. They use their styles and techniques to confidently experiment with a range of media.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupil well-being and attitudes to learning are a significant strength of the school. Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel happy within its caring and nurturing environment. Pupils trust and respect adults. They are confident that staff will listen to any concerns they have. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know who they need to go to for care and advice. They take regular advantage of the variety of strategies for supporting their emotional and social well-being and as a result many develop as happy, healthy and confident individuals.

Most pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons and maintain a good level of interest in their work. They enjoy being challenged in their learning when given the opportunity. Across the school, nearly all pupils concentrate well in lessons and activities. They make positive contributions during lessons and listen attentively to adults and to the ideas of others when working in pairs or groups. For example, older pupils eagerly share their design ideas when they create packaging for a chocolate bar.

Nearly all pupils behave well. The school's motto 'caring, sharing and loving' is reflected in pupils' behaviour. They are polite to each other, staff and visitors, showing care and courtesy. They interact with others enthusiastically and respectfully, sharing equipment maturely and playing well together. Pupils' well-being is a priority for the school and all pupils develop worthwhile strategies to be calm and

to help them to focus on their learning. Throughout the school, older pupils chosen as 'Happiness Heroes' support their peers by helping them to regulate their behaviour.

Most pupils understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. They learn about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables in class and enjoy the fruit offered to them at breaktimes. They often make healthy food choices and participate enthusiastically in a range of sporting activities during lessons. Many older pupils take advantage of additional opportunities to be active after school by joining in with the sports clubs. They are proud to represent their school in local sporting tournaments.

Many pupils develop their leadership skills suitably through a range of roles and pupil groups such as Pupil Parliament, Eco Club and Faith Group. Pupils in these groups are responsible for setting agendas, taking minutes and working towards specific actions. For example, the Pupil Parliament organise the annual Rights Respecting Day where pupils look at the impact of human rights on different groups within society. However, many of these groups are relatively newly formed and therefore their influence on school life is limited.

Most pupils develop well as ethical, informed citizens. They understand the purpose of rules, rewards and sanctions in school and know the difference between right and wrong. For example, they create class charters to encourage positive behaviour. Older pupils have a strong awareness of their rights as a child and create videos and presentations to share with their teachers to demonstrate their understanding. Through curriculum work, many older pupils have a good understanding of cultural diversity. They recognise that people come from different cultures and have different religions and characteristics, and that these should be celebrated and respected.

The youngest pupils take ownership of their learning and develop their independent skills successfully. However, as they move through the school, many pupils miss out on opportunities to make choices about how and what they learn. As a result, they do not always apply their skills with appropriate levels of independence.

When given the opportunity, pupils value and respond to feedback from adults and their peers. However, pupils do not always develop an understanding of their strengths or understand what they need to do to improve.

Rates of attendance have improved considerably but remain quite low overall.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff develop warm and positive working relationships for all pupils and provide high levels of care. They create calm, happy working environments, which support pupils' emotional well-being. These excellent working relationships are a strength of the school and, as a result, most pupils make good progress in managing their emotions. Skilful teaching assistants support pupils' learning and well-being effectively, for example by implementing specific intervention and support programmes.

Plans to implement Curriculum for Wales are at an early stage of development. Teachers have started to work with pupils to incorporate their ideas for topics into the

curriculum overview for the school. However, opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn are in the early stages of development. Most teachers use the outdoor learning environment suitably. The pond area is used well to provide stimulating learning experiences and the planting area allows pupils the opportunity to grow produce which is also used within the school 'Food Pantry', a charity supporting the school foodbank. These experiences help pupils to develop effective relationships as well as an environmental awareness and have a positive effect on pupils' practical and communication skills.

Teachers organise their classrooms suitably and create a positive ethos for learning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers provide learning experiences for pupils that engage their interests effectively. They link activities to previous learning and give clear explanations that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently. However, staff do not use questioning to move learning forward or clarify pupils' understanding frequently enough. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and adults tend to over-direct lessons, which impacts on pupils' ability to develop their independent learning skills.

Teachers do not always match the level of challenge to pupils' needs well enough, which limits their progress. Written feedback is celebratory, but it does not help pupils to know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

The school enriches its curriculum and learning experiences suitably and teachers use places of interest within the locality to support learning. For example, visits to Big Pit help to develop pupils' understanding of the history of coal mining, whilst visits to the National Museum of Wales provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to learn about the history, culture and geography of Wales.

School staff provide suitable opportunities to celebrate the culture and history of Wales and to learn about people and events which this. For example, younger pupils study Jeremy Thomas, a Welsh artist, and use his style to represent the key features of their local village. Where teaching is most effective, teachers model the Welsh language effectively. The school's work to develop pupils' Welsh language speaking skills is developing appropriately and pupils use the Welsh language suitably around school and in the classroom.

Teachers plan appropriate activities that enable pupils to learn about people from a variety of ethnic minority communities both in Wales and the wider world. For example, in the topic 'Chocolate', older pupils carry out research on the chocolate making process including the importance of Fairtrade and its impact on communities.

The school has suitable extra-curricular activities that develop pupils' creative and physical skills purposefully. For example, many older pupils enjoy attending football and basketball clubs, where they develop confidence and teamwork. In addition, visitors such as the local priest enhance the curriculum through assemblies and planned activities.

Care, support and guidance

All Saints Primary School is a compassionate and nurturing community where nearly all pupils feel happy and cared for. Staff focus on maintaining positive relationships

and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, using effective strategies such as pastoral support plans to manage and support their behaviour well. Overall, this strong focus on pupil well-being is a strength of the school.

Leaders and staff have developed positive relationships with parents and the wider community to support pupils' learning and well-being effectively. Parents appreciate the high level of support that pupils and their families receive.

The school has appropriate processes in place to identify and support pupils with ALN. Staff write appropriate one-page profiles that include useful information about pupils' individual needs. They set appropriate targets to move pupils with ALN forward in their learning. Teachers review individual pupil progress regularly and leaders are beginning to evaluate the impact of support programmes on their progress effectively. Teaching assistants engage the pupils well during intervention sessions and these sessions provide positive and sustained change to the pupils' ability to access their learning.

The school ensures worthwhile provision for vulnerable pupils and enables all pupils to attend a trip each year to enrich their learning. The school uses grant funding well to provide curriculum enrichment experiences in the expressive arts. For example, external providers visit the school to deliver music and dance workshops.

Staff promote pupils' moral, social and cultural development well. Purposeful displays around the school communicate its morals and values effectively. Teachers ensure opportunities to develop understanding of different faiths. For example, older pupils learn about the Jewish holy day, Yom Kippur.

The school provides some worthwhile opportunities for pupils to engage with and learn from the local community. For example, the school choir regularly go to sing at a local care home and grandparents visit school to support pupils with gardening. Pupils develop an appreciation and understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. For example, as part of their learning about 'Cynefin', pupils visit Big Pit and St Fagans. Pupils enjoy celebrating their Welsh heritage at the annual school Eisteddfod. Opportunities to explore the local area and visits to nearby places of interest occasionally inspire pupils but are not part of a coherent curriculum that develops over time.

The school enables pupils to develop a suitable understanding of diversity and the differences within society. For example, the school provides opportunities for pupils to learn about 'the global majority' and celebrates a diverse range of inspirational figures such as Betty Campbell and Marcus Rashford. Staff also ensure that all pupils understand the importance of healthy living. For example, they provide a variety of after school clubs to support their understanding of eating a healthy diet and the importance of physical exercise.

Staff have recently provided opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles in a range of areas, for example Pupil Parliament, Eco Club and School Council, and this adds to the sense of fairness and equality throughout the school. These roles help develop pupils' self-confidence and collaboration skills.

The school creates and maintains a safe environment for all pupils and all staff promote a positive culture of safeguarding. The school uses robust strategies to monitor and track the attendance and punctuality of all pupils. They work closely with pupils and their families whose attendance is not good enough and, as a result, attendance continues to improve.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides caring leadership and promotes the school as a close-knit and inclusive community successfully. He has a clear vision based on, 'caring, sharing, loving' for the school, and conveys this vision successfully to staff, parents, governors, and pupils.

Staff collaborate well to ensure that pupil well-being is at the heart of their work. Together, they create a happy, caring, learning environment where pupils work and play together confidently. All staff promote the school's agreed vision and values successfully and this contributes positively to a strong team ethos and mutual respect between pupils and. Together, they have created a positive safeguarding culture and a welcoming, nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and valued.

Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and local community and work with commitment to meet these needs. At the core of the school is a thoughtful and inclusive culture that ensures that pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively with all learning experiences. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment to making time in school positive and enjoyable for all.

There is an appropriate awareness and commitment to address local and national priorities successfully. Staff work collaboratively to improve the attainment of pupils from low-income households and are beginning to work together to implement Curriculum for Wales and develop pupils' Welsh language skills. Appropriate changes have been made in the provision for ALN pupils. However, planning for curriculum reform is at the early stages of development.

Staff know the school and local community well. Leaders have used this information to develop appropriate processes to evaluate the school's performance and to plan for improvement. They are beginning to work effectively with staff to develop a collective responsibility for self-evaluation and school improvement. Arrangements to monitor the school's work are robust and draw on a range of evidence including learning walks, listening to learners and work scrutiny. However, leaders do not always use this information well enough to identify the most important areas for improvement. For example, they have not identified the need to ensure that the curriculum is cohesive and progressive throughout the school and provides appropriate challenge to pupils. Staff hold regular pupil progress meetings to consider individual pupils' progress, ensuring that pupils who are found to be underperforming are identified quickly and that suitable provision is put in place.

Leaders ensure that all staff have relevant opportunities to engage in professional learning linked to performance management, which impacts positively on their own development. However, these opportunities do not always influence the outcomes for pupils effectively enough. Staff often undertake professional development with

colleagues from local schools, for example to increase their knowledge of the areas of learning and experience. However, roles and responsibilities within the leadership team are not sufficiently developed to have a positive impact on the direction of the school.

Leaders develop strong and effective links with parents and there is a combined commitment to supporting pupils' learning and well-being. This is strengthened by regular communication, which helps parents to understand how they can support their children's learning at home. Parents are consulted purposefully about the work of the school and feel that they are respected members of the school community.

The governing body is well informed and supports the work of the school well. Governors have a sound understanding of pupils' needs and know the community the school serves very well. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and take part in learning walks and discussions with staff and pupils about elements of provision. This supports their understanding of current priorities and strengthens their involvement as critical friends. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily.

School leaders and governors manage the school's finances efficiently and deploy them sensibly in line with the priorities in the school improvement plan. They make purposeful use of additional grant funding, including the pupil development grant, which is used wisely to provide focused support to help and encourage pupils' learning and well-being. Staff use the school's resources appropriately to support teaching and learning and this strengthens pupils' physical and mental well-being. They make regular use of the extensive school grounds, including the pond area, to provide stimulating opportunities for outdoor learning.

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2024: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 03/07/2024