



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

A report on

St Robert's Primary Catholic School

**Danylan
Aberkenfig
Bridgend
CF32 9AB**

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

About St Robert's Primary Catholic School

Name of provider	St Robert's Primary Catholic School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	187
Pupils of statutory school age	147
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 23.7%)	14.7%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	0.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/06/2011
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/04/2015
Start date of inspection	20/05/2024

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

St. Robert's Roman Catholic Primary School provides a caring, supportive environment for its pupils and their families. The school has very strong, beneficial links with the local community.

The pupil representative groups lead initiatives that help school leaders to improve aspects of school life as well as working to help others locally and further afield. Nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in supporting these initiatives. Pupils often learn about those less fortunate than themselves and nearly all show empathy and thoughtfulness in their responses.

There are regular opportunities for pupils to present their work and their ideas to parents and to the whole school. Pupils feel that staff listen to their ideas for school improvement and act on these ideas. However, opportunities for pupils to influence how they learn in lessons are too limited.

The school's values permeate the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils understand the importance of the school's rules and nearly all behave very well. As a result of the school's values and teaching, most pupils are developing successfully as ethical, informed citizens.

Most pupils make very good progress in their learning from their starting points. They make rapid progress with their literacy skills during their time at the school, becoming confident readers who regularly read for pleasure. Most pupils develop strong writing skills, and they produce interesting written work which they present with care. Most develop good numeracy skills, which they apply well in different contexts. However, pupils' digital skills are less well-developed, as pupils do not use information technology independently enough across the curriculum.

Teachers and learning support officers work together effectively to develop learning experiences that engage nearly all pupils and meet their needs successfully. They have devised a curriculum that encourages pupils to think about important questions, developing strong speaking and listening skills whilst respecting others' points of view. Staff promote Welsh culture and heritage successfully and most pupils enjoy using their Welsh language skills.

The headteacher, governors and staff have high aspirations for the school, and they are dedicated to improving provision for their pupils. Leaders and governors evaluate the school's performance accurately, identifying appropriate priorities for improvement. They implement improvement actions effectively. Leaders plan for all staff to have valuable professional learning opportunities and develop the school as a successful learning organisation.

Recommendations

- R1 Refine teaching to enable pupils to make decisions about how they learn and use their digital skills independently

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Overall, most pupils at St. Robert's Roman Catholic Primary school make very good progress from starting points that are at or above those expected for their age. Most leave the school with strong literacy and numeracy skills.

Most pupils make strong progress with their speaking and listening skills. The youngest pupils describe how their caterpillars sleep in a cocoon and wake up as a butterfly, speaking in full sentences and with enthusiasm. As they move through the school, most pupils develop as articulate, confident speakers who ask and answer questions thoughtfully, explaining and justifying their responses. Most pupils listen carefully and with attention to detail. For instance, younger pupils listen and respond carefully to instructions and are attentive in whole-school gatherings. Older pupils listen purposefully to video news reports to recall information that they use when writing newspaper articles.

Most pupils develop as enthusiastic readers. Younger pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to work out unfamiliar words and read what they have written with good accuracy. Older pupils locate important information in texts about their topics. The oldest pupils read longer novels and choose favourite authors, giving reasons to explain why they enjoy them.

Most pupils develop quickly as independent writers. Younger pupils write their names accurately and begin to have a go at writing in a simple sentence. Over time, their writing develops well, and older pupils write at length for a variety of purposes. For example, they write persuasively to encourage people to stop deforestation. By the time they leave the school, most pupils enjoy writing independently and do so with confidence and clarity, using a neat, cursive script.

Across the school, most pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh develop successfully. Most pupils have a sound grasp of basic language patterns, appropriate to their age and prior learning. For example, they engage in simple conversations about themselves, their families and where they live. Most pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning the Welsh language. The Criw Cymraeg pupils take their role very seriously. They are enthusiastic role models when promoting the use of conversational Welsh to others around the school. For example, many pupils play the Welsh games the Criw Cymraeg have introduced at playtimes.

Most pupils make good progress with their mathematical skills, particularly their understanding of number and calculation. From an early age, most pupils develop an understanding of how the number system works. For example, in Reception most

pupils enjoy performing actions as they learn to count forward and backward in 2s and 5s up to a 100. Older pupils measure the weight of apples and oranges accurately using a balance scale and use their times tables knowledge to calculate fractions of halves, quarters, and thirds correctly. As they move through the school, many pupils build well on these firm foundations, for example to measure different leaves collected in the school grounds and to see if the longest leaves come from the tallest trees using a digital database. By Year 6, most pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of shape and space and handling data well. For example, they translate and reflect shapes in the four quadrants and convert kilometres into miles by using a conversion graph. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills confidently across the curriculum.

Many pupils use digital technology enthusiastically across the school. For example, younger pupils enjoy controlling a floor robot to move up and down a grid. As they move through the school, pupils use straightforward software appropriately to add information to a spreadsheet on temperatures across the world and use a formula to find the average temperature. However, many pupils lack confidence in using information technology independently.

The creative and physical skills of most younger pupils develop purposefully, for example, the nursery pupils develop their ball skills by catching, passing, and rolling in the outdoor area. They develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example nursery pupils concentrate well when cutting clay or winding with wool. As they progress through the school, many older pupils' creative skills develop well, and they use them in a beneficial range of activities across the curriculum. For example, in Year 3 pupils create a dance in pairs to show the different levels of the rainforest. Further up the school older pupils create paintings in the style of local artists very effectively.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The behaviour of nearly all pupils during lessons and when moving around the school is good. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors and greet unfamiliar adults with respect.

Most pupils say they feel safe at school, know who to go to for support and understand that staff will help them when they are worried or have a problem. Most pupils work and play together very effectively and enjoy opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. They support each other in lessons and at playtimes. For example, older pupils display a positive sporting attitude when playing a class game where their peers vote them out.

Nearly all pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They embrace the opportunities that the school provides with enthusiasm, are conscientious with their work and show perseverance with their tasks. Most take pride in presenting work well and they try to meet teachers' high expectations. Most pupils value the feedback that staff give them and use it to improve their work effectively.

Older pupils show good awareness of the importance of rules. For example, they advise others that energy drinks are not good for you and that too much screen time can disrupt your sleep. Nearly all pupils show good understanding of how to stay

healthy. They respect the school's rules about eating only healthy snacks during the day.

Nearly all pupils engage enthusiastically with opportunities to think about important questions. Most pupils respect each other's points of view. Older pupils make well-considered arguments for and against different opinions. They begin to understand aspects of democracy and fairness. They enjoy discussing a moral dilemma and suggest how they might solve an ethical problem by making good choices.

The range of pupil voice groups enables pupils to take part in worthwhile activities to develop as ethically aware and well-informed citizens. Most pupils show empathy when hearing about the lives of those who are less fortunate than themselves. For example, the pupil representatives in 'St. Bob's Community Outreach Group' promote ideas to enable all pupils to make a positive difference in the local community, by raising money for charities, helping homeless people, or collecting food for a local foodbank. Pupil representatives also help the senior leadership team to improve the school. For example, the school council wanted to improve the playground and worked with leaders to erect new goalposts on the yard. Most pupils say they feel listened to, and that staff act on their suggestions. However, opportunities for pupils to make decisions about how they learn or present their work in lessons are under-developed. As a result, pupils do not always develop their independent learning skills sufficiently.

Attendance rates have improved over the last two years and are currently in line with where they were before the pandemic. The attendance data for pupils who are eligible for free school meals compares well with current national and local data.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum is developing in line with its vision to provide an inclusive, equitable and engaging experience for all pupils. Through discussion, staff have identified knowledge rich, enquiry-based learning experiences for their pupils, which ensures that pupils make strong progress in developing their knowledge and understanding during their time at the school.

Staff work as a team to map out teaching experiences which take note of all areas of learning and the development of pupils' basic skills. Teachers prioritise pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. They plan for the development of these skills in a systematic way to ensure that most pupils make good progress in readiness for the next stage of their learning. However, opportunities for pupils to use their digital skills independently as part of their learning are less well developed.

Teachers ensure beneficial opportunities for pupils to consider what they would like to learn at the start of new topics. They ask pupils what they would like to find out and ensure that they address pupils' questions when devising their lessons. They ensure well-considered arrangements to promote pupils' understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. For example, younger pupils make collages based on the work of a Welsh artist and older pupils visit places of local interest, such as Parc Slip, to learn about the mining disaster that happened there.

Teachers place a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' oracy and questioning skills. For instance, they encourage pupils to discuss, and they use

effective questioning to promote deep thinking about matters of local and global importance, including climate change and good citizenship. There are effective arrangements to promote the school's values and the importance of helping others in the local community and further afield. The school is beginning to help pupils to understand aspects of diversity. For example, through learning about immigration in Cardiff, older pupils consider how the Windrush generation felt when treated unfairly due to racism.

There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills through studying the work of artists, using this to inspire their own artwork or through developing a dance to represent the sinking of the Titanic. The school provides a range of extra-curricular clubs which offer interesting opportunities to support pupils' health and well-being. These include netball, football, knitting and an opportunity for older pupils to develop outdoor pursuits at Llangrannog.

There are extensive arrangements to develop pupils' personal and social education through a planned programme of age-appropriate provision. The school makes effective use of visitors, such as the school nurse and police liaison officers, to support this provision. Older pupils begin to think about the choices that will face them as they transfer to secondary school, and they learn about aspects of hygiene in readiness for a residential visit away from home. The school provides useful opportunities for pupils to learn about how to stay safe online and the impact of too much screen time on mental and physical health.

Most teachers develop learning experiences based on a very good understanding of their pupils' needs. They use a range of assessment data well to inform their planning. Most teachers have clear expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and they monitor pupils' progress carefully. They give beneficial feedback during lessons to help pupils to improve their work. Most teachers encourage older pupils to evaluate their own work but opportunities to evaluate the work of others are less well-developed. Teachers encourage older pupils to choose their own level of challenge when starting tasks. However, this practice is at an early stage of implementation.

Nearly all teachers use a range of strategies to promote effective learning and collaboration. For example, they often enable pupils to work in pairs. Most make good use of games to support pupils' progress and enjoyment, for example when learning to speak Welsh. During lessons, nearly all teachers use effective questioning and encouragement to engage pupils successfully.

There are worthwhile opportunities for younger pupils to explore and learn independently at first hand, such as when they choose to write about the butterflies they have hatched, or they make mud cakes outdoors. However, older pupils have fewer opportunities to lead their own learning.

Teachers plan carefully with learning support officers (LSOs) to support their pupils to make progress. The LSOs intervene effectively in lessons to support pupils' confidence and understanding. They lead useful interventions to help pupils to catch up when needed.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides valuable support for pupils' emotional, health and social needs. Staff develop positive relationships with pupils and know the pupils and their families well. This strong support for well-being results in nearly all pupils behaving in line with the school's high expectations.

Staff support pupils effectively with their learning, social and emotional needs. The school works successfully with a wide range of agencies to provide bespoke support for pupils and their families, including access to counselling and play therapy sessions. Staff provide a broad range of useful interventions to support pupils' literacy and numeracy development. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) monitors and evaluates the impact of these interventions, to ensure that they remain purposeful and meet the needs of pupils. The ALNCo works effectively in partnership with ALNcos across the cluster and liaises with a variety of external agencies, including educational psychologists and the 'Early Hub', to provide help and advice for staff and for families who would benefit from additional support. The ALNCo has a good understanding of the national priority for additional needs reform and shares this information with staff well.

Staff are beginning to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to explore issues related to diversity, equality and inclusion and to understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse world. The school provides opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other people's faith. For example, Year 6 pupils identify the differences between Islam and Christianity and examine how beliefs shape the daily life of Muslims.

Pupils have opportunities to lead initiatives which make a difference in the school or the community. They learn about national well-known figures who have shaped society, such as suffragettes and Malala Yousafzai. The 'St. Bobs Cogs' pupil voice team carry out valuable charity and community work and sponsor a child from Ecuador.

The school is committed to developing pupils' sense of Welsh identity. Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture of Wales. Pupils study people in Welsh history, such as Llewellyn the Great, asking the thoughtful question 'was he really great?' They study world and national events and the impact these had on Wales. For example, during the topic 'Their Finest Hour', pupils research Bridgend's contribution to World War Two. Staff organise worthwhile visits that support the curriculum and help pupils to learn more about their local area and Wales. Pupils celebrate their Welsh culture and heritage in the school Eisteddfod.

The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and to engage with the creative arts. For instance, younger pupils create atmospheric winter landscapes out of different coloured tissue paper and make healthy fruit faces. Older pupils create their own graffiti art after learning about Banksy. The school provides worthwhile experiences that enable pupils to take part in performances. Pupils present their learning to parents during learner forums, class assemblies and when they perform in Christmas and end of year concerts.

Staff provide older pupils with the opportunity of a residential trip that provides valuable new experiences. The school enables pupils to take part in sporting activities including an annual inter-school football tournament.

Following recent training, the school has strengthened its safeguarding procedures. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. They work effectively with external agencies such as the education welfare service to support families to achieve good attendance for pupils at school.

Leadership and management

Working with governors, staff, pupils and parents, the headteacher has established and communicated a clear vision for the school based firmly on its agreed values. She has created a strong team ethic across the school through maintaining high levels of collaboration and trust.

Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and local community. They work with dedication to create a vibrant learning community that meets these needs well. At the core of the school is a thoughtful and inclusive culture that ensures that all pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively with their learning experiences. Leaders place appropriate emphasis on establishing and upholding a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

The headteacher has high expectations of herself and her staff. Leaders are very good role models. They promote the importance of Welsh language and culture effectively. They are aspirational for pupils' futures and pursue opportunities to support pupils' and families' lives positively. For example, the new toddlers' group in the school gives opportunities for local children and parents to play and communicate together in the school setting and supports a smooth transition into school life.

Leaders have established a structure and distribution of roles and responsibilities that is effective and supports the school's determination to improve. The headteacher encourages staff to develop their skills and leaders support a successful culture of professional learning well. For example, learning support officers receive training to help them to improve vulnerable pupils' social and emotional skills and self-esteem. This helps to improve the engagement of many pupils with their learning. LSOs have valuable opportunities to share their knowledge with each other, which has a positive impact on provision, standards and well-being across the school. Leaders create opportunities for teachers to grow into leadership roles and for support staff to progress their careers. As a result, the school is a positive learning organisation for all.

Leaders ensure a shared strategic direction and sense of responsibility amongst all staff for delivering against national and school priorities. The school identifies its strengths accurately and shares these effectively. For example, leaders and staff presented their work on philosophical questioning to other local schools. They demonstrated how pupils benefit from discussing key concepts, develop the ability to think for themselves, and transfer their speaking and listening skills to other areas of learning. The monitoring processes in the school are thorough and identify areas for improvement for effectively.

The school's work in partnership with parents, support agencies and other schools is successful. As a result, most parents feel confident that the school is doing the right thing for pupils and acting in their best interests. Staff invite parents to make suggestions on the schools' themes and projects and seeks their views on school improvement. For example, staff acted on parents' contributions to the topics that pupils study, such as including the use of renewable energy in a topic called 'blowing in the wind'. The school works closely with local universities and agencies, supporting student teachers effectively. Several specialist agencies, such as speech and language and educational psychologists, attend the school regularly to provide direct support to pupils.

Members of the governing body are highly supportive of their school. They discharge their duties well over a range of committees and bring expertise to their roles. They have a good understanding of pupil progress and the school's priorities. Link governors visit classes regularly in line with their areas of responsibility. They support self-evaluation activities and allocate funding appropriately to support the school's priorities.

Leaders use the pupil development grant sensibly, which has a positive effect on the progress and well-being of groups of learners. Governors work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. School leaders establish, monitor, and maintain the safeguarding culture in the school, keeping staff training up to date.

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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