



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

A report on

St Giles VC Church in Wales Primary School

**Madeira Hill
Wrexham
LL13 7HD**

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

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

About St Giles VC Church in Wales Primary School

Name of provider	St Giles VC Church in Wales Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales VC
Number of pupils on roll	407
Pupils of statutory school age	363
Number in nursery classes	44
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%)	25.9%
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%)	7.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	71%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2016
Start date of inspection	17/06/2024

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 Giles Church in Wales Primary School is a happy, inclusive school where leaders place a high importance on the well-being of pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Nearly all pupils are kind and considerate to each other and behave very well. The school develops strong working relationships with parents and the community.

Nearly all pupils settle in well when they join the school. Many pupils, including those with English as an additional language (EAL) and those attending the learning resource provision (LRP) class, make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. However, the quality of teaching and assessment is variable. As a result, staff do not build on pupils' knowledge and skills systematically. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils read with confidence and fluency. However, overall, the teaching of reading is inconsistent and pupils do not develop effective higher order reading skills, such as inference and deduction.

Teachers plan a range of learning activities that focus well on the termly topics. However, teaching often lacks pace and does not meet the needs of all pupils well enough. Staff tend to over-direct learning activities and do not regularly provide feedback for pupils to improve their work. As a result, pupils do not develop sufficiently strong independent learning skills.

Leaders' plans for school improvement do not focus sharply enough on the progress and development of pupils' outcomes or skills. Although they have identified areas to improve, such as the development of reading and phonics, progress is slow and lacks rigour. They do not always identify other important areas in need of improvement, such as pupils' digital skills and their use of numeracy across the curriculum.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety concerns raised during the inspection
- R2 Improve leadership and self-evaluation in order to identify and address areas for improvement more accurately and promptly
- R3 Improve the pace and challenge of teaching so that it meets the needs of all pupils and develops their skills as independent learners
- R4 Improve provision for the systematic development of pupils' reading, digital and numeracy skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show

how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main evaluation

Learning

When pupils first join St. Giles Church in Wales Primary School, many have communication and social skills below those expected for their age. During their time at the school, many make suitable progress from their different starting points, including those in the learning resource provision (LRP) class and with English as an additional language (EAL).

Most pupils make good progress in developing their oracy skills. Across the school, many pupils speak with confidence and are keen to discuss their learning with staff or visitors. Many younger pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking skills from low starting points. They learn how to ask questions and talk enthusiastically about their themes, such as whether animals live in the North or South Poles. Older pupils discuss their work with partners purposefully, such as when identifying features of persuasive texts. By the end of Year 6, many pupils share their thoughts and opinions confidently with staff and other pupils.

The progress pupils make with their reading skills is variable across the school. Many younger pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds appropriately to decode unfamiliar words. However, inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics mean that they do not develop their reading skills systematically. Many older pupils read with fluency and confidence. They enjoy reading a range of texts and express preferences, for example when describing their enjoyment of adventure stories. They use their reading skills to understand research material provided by the teacher, for instance about famous artists. However, the progress of older pupils' reading skills is inconsistent and they do not develop effective higher order reading skills, such as inference and deduction.

Many pupils make suitable progress in their writing skills. Younger pupils enjoy mark making and show enthusiasm for forming letters when taking part in 'air writing'. By the end of Year 2, many pupils write in sentences and show a good understanding of basic punctuation. Older pupils develop a sound knowledge of the characteristics of different genres, and many apply their writing skills purposefully in a variety of authentic contexts. For example, pupils in Year 5 write a letter from an evacuee describing their experiences. However, due to a lack of opportunity, pupils' skills in redrafting and improving their work are limited.

Many pupils make effective progress in developing their mathematical skills and understanding. Younger pupils enjoy counting and develop money skills when using coins to pay for items in the class shop. By Year 2, many pupils begin to work accurately with numbers to a hundred and to tell the time. Older pupils develop a good understanding of place value and use a range of calculation methods appropriately. However, pupils frequently use worksheets in lessons. This means that they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum well enough. Pupils do not develop their mathematical skills in important areas, such as data handling and shape and space, well enough.

Most younger pupils develop their Welsh language skills well. They respond to simple requests and commands, listen to stories and enjoy their daily helper heddiw sessions. As pupils move through the school, they develop their Welsh skills appropriately and use basic sentence structures and vocabulary to talk about themselves, their hobbies and their families. Many pupils are keen to conduct simple conversations and greetings with visitors.

Across the school, pupils develop a few aspects of their digital skills suitably. Younger pupils use tablets to evidence their work, for example when recording a story about superheroes and villains. Older pupils use their digital skills regularly when presenting information, such as through word processing software. However, pupils do not develop knowledge and skills in other important aspects such as coding, spreadsheets or databases.

The youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills through a range of activities, such as using modelling clay to make a birthday cake. Pupils in Year 1 develop their co-ordination and balance well, for instance when using the slackline in the forest school area. However, opportunities for younger pupils to develop their physical and problem-solving skills through explorative play are limited as adults tend to over-direct learning. Older pupils develop their physical skills in a variety of sporting activities, including those provided by Wrexham Football Club. Many pupils develop their creative skills suitably in a variety of activities connected to their class themes. For example, younger pupils make mini beasts models using clay and natural materials.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They are proud of their school, support one another and feel that they are treated fairly. They know who to talk to if they have a problem or concern and are very confident that staff will deal with it appropriately. They feel safe at school and understand how to stay safe when working or playing online. Nearly all pupils behave well, are polite to staff and visitors and show positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships between pupils and adults are strong across the school.

Pupils in leadership roles take them seriously and make appropriate contributions to the life and work of the school. For instance, the pupils' eco committee and school council collect information about snacks brought in from home and promote the importance of them being healthy. This helps most pupils to know the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Pupil leaders speak enthusiastically about their idea to introduce playground buddies and playmakers. This has had a positive effect on break times by encouraging physical activity and supporting pupil well-being.

Most pupils develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as ethical and informed citizens. Year 2 pupils write sentences about how they show care for others, for example by helping a neighbour take out their bins. Pupils across the school show tolerance and respect of each other, including many pupils from different nationalities in the school.

Nearly all pupils in the LRP class enjoy school and engage well in activities. Most demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, concentrate for appropriate periods of time and work well with a partner and in small groups.

Most pupils move around the school sensibly and listen to staff attentively. The youngest pupils work well in teams, for example when constructing their own life size igloo. Many pupils confidently explain how they use a growth mind set to help them persevere with their learning. Pupil resilience is developing suitably and nearly all pupils know where to get support from if they need it. Older pupils have a mature attitude to their work. Nearly all settle to work quickly and discuss their learning well with each other. However, the lack of purposeful feedback from staff limits pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. In addition, pupils do not develop their independent learning skills well enough due to over-direction from staff.

Although rates of attendance have improved from last year, they are too low. A few pupils are late in the mornings, and a few are persistently absent.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has developed a vision for the school curriculum with the focus of 'inspire, nurture and succeed'. Teachers collaborate successfully to develop enquiry questions at the beginning of each termly topic which engage pupils and encourage them to consider the direction of their learning. Many pupils suggest what they would like to learn at the start of topics. For example, in Year 5, pupils ask, 'Which animals are close to extinction?' However, regular opportunities for pupils to determine what and how they learn are underdeveloped in many classes. The majority of teachers are clear about the purpose of learning experiences and communicate this to pupils helpfully. Across the school, teaching assistants provide suitable support for pupils, including those with ALN.

When teachers plan stimulating and interesting activities, pupils engage purposefully in their learning. For example, when a 'dinosaur egg hatches' in a Year 2 classroom, pupils develop an action plan for how to go about finding the dinosaur. On Armistice Day in Year 4, pupils turn their classroom into World War I trenches and imagine how life must have been for the soldiers. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is slow, and the level of challenge does not meet the needs of all pupils well enough, particularly for more able pupils. The extensive use of worksheets from Year 2 upwards, particularly in literacy and maths lessons, along with over-direction from adults, prevents pupils developing as independent learners.

In the LRP class, staff plan an inclusive curriculum and respond well to the interests of learners. For example, following a pupil expressing an interest in pollution, the class learnt about plastic pollution and carried out a litter pick. Staff know the pupils' individual needs and adapt planning and learning activities to meet these successfully. They differentiate activities to provide appropriate challenge and support. Teaching assistants provide highly effective support for pupils' additional learning and emotional needs in a safe and caring environment. However, most activities are over-directed by adults and there are too few opportunities for pupils to explore and learn independently through multi-sensory activities.

Teachers enhance the school's curriculum through a range of visits and visitors, including a trip to Chirk Castle, that helps to develop pupils' understanding of the past. Staff organise a range of beneficial local trips to the park, high street and church. In addition, the school provides worthwhile trips to RAF Cosford and Manchester Airport to support pupils' topic work. In the resource provision class, trips and visits to the train station, airport, shopping trips and visits to the café develop pupils' life skills and understanding of the wider world. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to develop as global citizens. For example, Year 5 pupils learn about caring for the environment and the danger to wildlife and deforestation because of the use of palm oil.

Throughout the school, staff occasionally provide oral feedback to support pupils during their learning activities. Teachers provide opportunities for older pupils to assess their work and that of their peers, for example by considering their work against a set of success criteria. However, these tend to focus on a list of tasks to be completed rather than what pupils have learnt or how they can improve their work further.

Teachers plan a suitable range of activities to support learning both indoors and outdoors. In the youngest classes, pupils regularly access learning in the outdoor areas. For example, pupils in nursery and reception use a variety of resources in the front garden area to make rainbows after listening to a story about a rainbow dragon. However, from Year 2 upwards, teachers do not plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to use the outdoor areas regularly.

The school plans well for the structured development of pupils' Welsh language skills. As a result, most pupils make good progress in developing their communication skills in Welsh. The school's provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their own well-being and that of others well.

Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their oracy and mathematical skills. Although there is a suitable focus on the teaching of phonics in the younger classes, the approach is inconsistent. In addition, the development of pupils' numeracy, reading and digital skills is not planned systematically across each year group. Teachers do not use pupil assessment data to inform planning. As a result, pupils do not develop their skills and knowledge well enough.

Care, support and guidance

The school supports the emotional, health and social needs of pupils well. Positive relationships are a strong feature of the school, both between pupils and between the pupils themselves. Staff create a warm and caring environment where pupils feel valued and safe.

The school's provide effective support for pupils with ALN. Staff liaise purposefully with outside agencies and receive valuable support and guidance from them. The school has established strong links with the local special school. This enables pupils from the LRP class to benefit from their facilities and expertise. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) has developed robust procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with additional needs. She regularly checks the progress of pupils with ALN against their

individual targets. All pupils in school have useful pupil profiles that focus clearly on their individual needs. Support staff lead a range of intervention programmes across the school that support pupils' well-being and their literacy skills well. This supports pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) to make strong progress in their oracy skills. However, overall, the school does not currently monitor and evaluate the impact of support for targeted groups well. As a result, staff are not clear about how well additional support improves pupils' skills and progress.

In the school's LRP class, staff plan beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop life skills, for example through visits to the train station, shopping centre and cafes. Although teaching is adapted to the needs of the pupils, there are not sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn through exploratory play or multi-sensory experiences.

The school's in-house Eisteddfod provides pupils with valuable opportunities to perform and develop a range of skills including writing, speaking and singing in Welsh. The school promotes pupils' moral and cultural development appropriately through focused lessons as well as during collective acts of worship. Visitors and other agencies support pupils' understanding of keeping healthy, for example by discussing how to eat healthily or look after their teeth. The school arranges regular sports sessions from Wrexham Football Club that develop a range of physical skills. Staff ensure that pupils across the school take on leadership roles in a variety of purposeful groups. For example, members of the Criw Cymraeg promote the Welsh language successfully through a range of playtime games.

Actions taken by the school are starting to improve attendance. However, overall, rates of pupil attendance are too low, and the school does not monitor the attendance of pupil groups well enough. A few pupils are persistently absent and, when pupils are late for school in the morning, they are not always correctly marked in the attendance register.

There is a shared culture of safeguarding, and all staff understand their role in working together to keep pupils safe. However, the inspection team identified a well-being issue during the course of the inspection that it brought to the attention of the school.

Leadership and management

School leaders have successfully developed a shared vision that promotes a culture of nurture and inclusivity. The headteacher ensures positive working relationships with teachers and support staff. Senior leaders work together to create an ethos where staff feel valued and pupils feel safe in the school's caring environment. In general, staff have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and a clear sense of teamwork is evident within the school.

Leaders provide regular opportunities for teachers and support staff to contribute to self-evaluation processes. Senior leaders consider responses from staff when evaluating the overall work of the school. However, in many cases, self-evaluation processes are not robust enough and lack rigour. Senior leaders plan regular opportunities for monitoring activities such as lesson observations across the school. However, these activities do not always take place as planned and, when they are

carried out, they do not focus sharply enough on pupils' learning. Overall, leaders are too positive about the quality of teaching and do not focus sufficiently on the impact that the school's actions have on pupils' skills development. For example, leaders have identified the need to improve the teaching of phonics and reading, but progress has been too slow. In addition, leaders do not have a secure understanding of the school's most important areas for development, for example improving pupils' digital skills and the application of their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Leaders address local and national priorities suitably. The ALN transformation agenda has been well planned for, developed and led by the ALNCo and staff have been provided with quality support as a result of her strategic planning. The school has supported the development of the Welsh language skills of staff and has established an environment where the Welsh language is promoted and valued.

The school provides a range of suitable professional learning. Many staff engage enthusiastically in a range of activities and welcome opportunities to share practice within the school. For example, staff take part in school 'Learning Pods' as a way of researching and sharing approaches to implementing Curriculum for Wales. However, professional learning does not always focus sharply enough on the development of pupils' skills or improving teaching. In addition, professional learning is not always directly linked to securing improvement priorities.

The governing body is supportive of the school's work and fulfil their statutory duties appropriately. Governors have a positive relationship with the headteacher and a suitable awareness of national improvement priorities. Although governors regularly visit the school, there is an over-reliance on the information provided by the headteacher. They do not gather enough first-hand evidence to evaluate the impact of the school's work on pupil outcomes. This limits governors' capacity to hold the school to account. Governors are aware of their duties in relation to healthy eating and drinking, for example by providing all pupils with access to water dispensers. They work in collaboration with the headteacher to manage the budget efficiently and understand how the school uses the pupil development grant to support vulnerable pupils, for example through providing group well-being sessions. However, governors do not evaluate the success of grant funded initiatives within the school, for example their impact on developing pupils' skills

Leaders establish positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. The school knows its families well and communication with them is appropriate. Over the last year leaders have increased the number of opportunities for families to engage in the life of the school, for example by attending class assemblies. Leaders communicate the school's safeguarding culture effectively.

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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