



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

**A report on**

**Holy Family R.C. Primary School**

**Beechley Drive,  
Fairwater,  
Cardiff  
CF5 3SN**

**Date of inspection: June 2022**

**by**

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

## About Holy Family R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	Holy Family R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	163
Pupils of statutory school age	153
Number in nursery classes	
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 21.3%)	36.9%
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 22.2%)	21%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/10/2013
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022

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](https://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

Holy Family RC Primary School is a diverse community where contributions to its unique ethos and culture make it a warm, welcoming and exciting place to live and learn. Pupils at the school are respectful, confident and friendly. They love coming to school and are brimming with interesting comments and information about their time at the school whether right at the beginning of their journey or heading towards the end. They feel very safe and listened to and this is echoed by parents and carers who are full of praise for the dedicated staff. Throughout the school, pupils make very good progress in nearly all aspects of their learning. They thrive on the many opportunities they have to develop their use of language through a breadth of engaging topics and projects. They confidently express themselves, share their ideas and stretch their imagination. They reflect on their own and others' learning and achievement and challenge themselves to identify the skills they need to improve. Pupils make useful contributions to teachers' planning and are ready now to make a difference to other aspects of school life such as developing the outdoors and outdoor learning.

The school's shared vision for moral and social development is firmly at the heart of their curriculum. The close attention to equity and values supports pupil well-being and develops their sense of social justice. School staff work hard to create positive relationships between staff and pupils and extend these relationships to form trusting relationships between school and home, showing care and commitment to their families.

Teachers work with their pupils to plan learning experiences that engage them and capture their interests. There is a growing range of authentic opportunities to acquire and apply skills across the curriculum. Pupils respond especially well to these opportunities and enjoy spending time exploring ideas in depth. On occasion, where planning for learning is less influenced by pupils, the themes covered do not always give them the chance to explore the people and places that would make their learning more relevant. Nearly all teachers and support staff continuously look to develop their professional knowledge to improve their practice. This creates opportunities for pupils to excel in the areas of expertise their teachers bring. Allowing teachers to share this expertise more widely across the school would provide greater equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Senior leaders have created an effective vision for the school. Together with teachers and governors, they plan improvements that directly improve prospects for pupils and raise their aspirations. In particular, leaders and teachers successfully nurture creativity across the curriculum, enabling pupils to explore all aspects of their learning through art and digital media. They collectively and regularly review the impact of their work on pupil outcomes and make changes to their improvement plans when needed. Their careful consideration of pupil progress ensures that all pupils, including those with additional needs, language barriers and those who are vulnerable in other ways, make very good progress throughout their time at school.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Provide opportunities for all teachers to share their curriculum knowledge and expertise with colleagues
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to influence the school's plans to develop provision

## **What happens next**

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare case studies on its work in relation to how it has developed the high quality use of assessment for learning to support pupil progress; and on the teaching approaches used to secure rapid progress in speaking and listening skills for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time in school, most pupils make strong progress in developing and applying their skills, knowledge and understanding from their individual starting points. This includes pupils with additional learning needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils recall and build on previous learning successfully to deepen their understanding and develop new learning effectively. When pupils first join the school, a majority need significant support, for example, to improve speech and communication skills. However, they make rapid progress, settling into school life quickly and developing positive relationships with staff and their peers.

Literacy development is exceptional at Holy Family RC school and as a result nearly all pupils make strong progress. They become respectful listeners and confident speakers from an early age. They keenly talk about their school and enjoy playing, chatting and acting in the classroom farm shop. By Year 2, pupils confidently and thoughtfully evaluate their performance in film production. As pupils move further through the school, they continue to develop their speaking and listening skills very successfully and by the end of Year 6 they have a sophisticated understanding of how to express themselves and articulate their ideas to suit a variety of situations from general discussion, to formal presentation, to controlled and informed debate.

Overall, pupils' reading skills develop well. Younger pupils begin to develop a love of reading when listening carefully to stories. They happily give their opinion on the characters they meet and excitedly discuss the problems they create and how these might be solved. They use their knowledge of phonics to decipher unfamiliar words and describe the events that take place in stories they have enjoyed. As they progress through the school, most pupils read with growing confidence. They self-correct appropriately and can explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 demonstrate their ability to skim and scan to quickly locate information, use glossaries to find definitions and use inference well when gathering information from the texts they read.

Pupils in reception enjoy experimenting with mark making and quickly progress to writing independently so that by Year 2, they punctuate and extend sentences with increasing accuracy when writing impressive stories about an adventure with friends. Older pupils write with a good understanding of a range of text types. For example, they produce reports about Charles Lindbergh's famous flight, send persuasive letters about the need for a healthy diet and compile fact files on topics of interest, such as The Suffragette movement. Overall, nearly all pupils apply their writing skills very well in many contexts and the standard of their presentation is good.

Nearly all pupils make very strong progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They confidently initiate conversation with visitors in Welsh. As pupils mature, their talk extends beyond simple greetings and phrases to communicate more complex information about themselves. By Year 6 pupils begin to write their own dialogue in Welsh, often using the past and future tense to elaborate on their descriptions.

Most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. Pupils in reception and Year 1 make 2D shapes from dough and accurately count how many shapes they have made to twenty. Pupils in Year 2 estimate how many cups of water they will need to fill a giant's teapot. As they move through the school nearly all pupils use a range of strategies to solve number problems. In Year 3 and Year 4 they use partitioning to calculate fractions, measure angles with increasing accuracy and work out the time to five-minute intervals. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 work confidently when multiplying and dividing decimal numbers and using co-ordinates over four quadrants. They are beginning to apply their knowledge to an increasing range of authentic experiences such as using data gathered to compare the temperature of holiday destinations and measuring the height of beanstalks as they grow.

Nearly all pupils develop a wide range of digital skills and use them in different contexts with confidence. Younger pupils collaborate to create simple animations of the Welsh-speaking farmyard animals they have drawn, and record puppet shows to retell a story. As they move through the school, they use technology to publish and present their work. They develop a wide range of highly polished skills to design and create, for example, a clothing range and household items. The oldest pupils confidently use complex programs to control devices and produce objects to sell with a 3D printer. They produce high quality recorded adverts. Generally, pupils apply their literacy and digital skills very well in other areas of the curriculum, using increasingly complex skills appropriately. When given the opportunity they apply their numeracy skills across all areas of learning well.

Pupils develop their creative and artistic skills well. The youngest pupils make models of animals and use their imagination to build on what they know about plants to create their own unique flower. As they progress through the school, pupils refine their artistic techniques by studying impressionism and pop art. They develop their art using line, tone, shade and colour and further develop these skills when drawing and painting still life objects with precision. Pupils solve problems and apply their thinking skills well to a range of situations. For example, in Year 2 during their work on Jack and the Beanstalk they investigate a crime scene at Jack's house. They look for clues and record their evidence carefully. They work well in groups to solve the mystery. Pupils in Year 5 apply their skills to researching products to make and sell from recycled plastic. They consider marketing, pricing and costs before creating the objects and decorating them.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

At Holy Family RC school, pupils are considerate and treat one another, staff and visitors with great respect. Pupils learn to form and maintain secure friendships and as a result, most feel safe and happy in school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They move around the building in a calm manner and behave well in class and at break times. They use class charters to ensure that everyone is safe and can learn without disruption.

Across the school, pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Younger pupils engage enthusiastically with teacher-led activities when completing tasks independently and when at play. They are keen to find things out for themselves and particularly enjoy completing challenges in the outdoor sound shed and mud kitchen. Older pupils are often highly engaged in their learning experiences. They work well in

pairs and groups, and they persevere when learning new skills, making very good progress in their learning as a result. Most pupils respond well to written and verbal feedback from teachers, other adults and from their peers, for example to improve the quality of their writing. From a young age, pupils take ownership of their learning and clearly articulate their next steps. As they move through the school, they use success criteria and teachers' feedback to identify and understand what they need to do to improve. By the end of their time in school pupils develop a sophisticated approach to assessing their own learning and that of others. They act as leaders of learning, through modelling their work and sharing their individual expertise with their peers.

Most pupils enjoy opportunities to be active, for example exploring the school's large outdoor apparatus at playtimes and refining their athletics skills in readiness for sports day. They participate enthusiastically in physical education sessions. Many pupils make healthy food choices and understand the importance of eating a healthy breakfast at the beginning of the day to prepare themselves for learning. Most pupils develop a sound understanding of how to protect themselves online. They recognise that safe sites are indicated by a padlock symbol and know who to turn to if problems arise when using search engines. Following a period of inactivity due to the pandemic, the Criw Cymraeg pupil voice group are continuing their work on promoting the use of Welsh across the school. For example, they are working together with the healthy eating group at lunch times to promote the use of Welsh and encourage pupils to make good food choices. Older pupils contribute to important school policies. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn in the outdoors.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report on pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Teachers and support staff have high expectations and often provide stimulating and appropriately challenging learning experiences. They use their in-depth knowledge to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Key to this is the highly effective use of assessment for learning, which is an outstanding feature of the school's provision and used consistently well across the school. A robust approach to assessing pupils, providing clear immediate feedback and identifying the next steps in learning, often allows pupils to make rapid progress.

Pupils benefit from the high-quality teaching they receive across the school. Committed teachers use a wide range of perceptive approaches, including the use of questioning and reflection time, to create depth of understanding in the concepts taught, and to move the learning on appropriately. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils have a positive impact on the learning environment, which is welcoming, calm and highly productive. Teaching assistants are integral to learning experiences. They balance support with independence and allow pupils to persevere at their tasks appropriately to secure their understanding.

Across the school, nearly all teachers plan exciting opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills across the curriculum. They plan opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and digital skills well. The youngest children use mobile technology to retell fairy tales and explain how to create a simple animation. Older pupils manipulate images and text confidently to present their work on rivers and produce line graphs to support their conclusions in science investigations. Teachers, together with pupils, plan visits to interesting places which enhance learning. On occasion, pupils are able to learn purposefully outdoors, for example, creating freeze-frames of Zacchaeus in the tree in the forest school area. Generally, teachers do not always take full advantage of the extensive outdoor area in their planning across the curriculum.

Teachers across the school take an inclusive approach to planning which supports and reflects the schools' wide and diverse community. Learning experiences celebrate the rich culture and heritage of Wales as pupils learn about their locality and life further afield. Pupils explore the River Taff at Cilfynydd when learning about rivers, for example, and visit Castell Coch to gather evidence about the past. They take a physical step into the recent past through a visit to the Gwalia Stores in the nearby museum of Welsh Life, and discover how artists such as Gayle Rogers capture the past in their work.

Leaders and teachers worked with pupils, parents and governors to create a clear vision for the school's curriculum. This vision sets out their aim to provide a curriculum that is inclusive, engaging and challenging, and that equips pupils for their future. The school's work on the Language Literacy and Communication Area, for example, has resulted in outstanding provision for speaking and listening, in both Welsh and English. Teachers are beginning to develop suitable plans for the areas of learning and experience. However, the school acknowledges that it is at an early stage of development in relation to planning for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

Visitors to the school help pupils to explore the world of work and find out about the skills, personal attributes and qualifications needed for a variety of careers. Staff benefit from professional learning to support their understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and each teacher has responsibility within an area of learning and experience. Staff collaborate well with partner schools to improve provision, particularly in relation to its Catholic context.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils are committed to building positive relationships across the school. This is a strong feature of the school and contributes significantly to pupils' happiness and well-being. The school's values-driven ethos helps pupils, including those arriving from other countries, to settle well into school life. This caring approach has also been particularly beneficial to pupils on their return to school after the COVID-19 closures. The school is a calm, yet stimulating, learning environment. Teachers work with pupils to create purposeful class charters that promote positive behaviour and use praise successfully to encourage positive attributes, such as kindness and cooperation, and to reward effort.

The support provided for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength of the school. Effective arrangements to identify and address pupil needs ensure that those requiring specific additional support make accelerated progress from their individual starting points. Every pupil in the school has a one-page profile, shared with parents, that outlines their unique talents, needs and developmental targets. These contribute to ensuring that the school and its partner agencies provide the right support at the right time for pupils. The school provides a suitable range of intervention strategies, such as those that help with the development of literacy skills and those designed to provide social and emotional support. Staff monitor pupil progress carefully and adjust the support when necessary. They successfully encourage pupils to engage positively in learning experiences.

The school has resumed the work of pupil voice groups halted by the pandemic. Staff ensure that groups such as the Criw Cymraeg and the healthy eating group support the school's work effectively, for example by providing them with the opportunity to lead assemblies and to promote the use of Welsh across the school. Teachers gather pupils' suggestions about what and how they would like to learn at the start of topics and include these appropriately in the planned learning experiences. When working with pupils in reception, teachers listen to their interests and incorporate these into learning and play purposefully, for instance by adapting the resources in the home corner. Older pupils are given opportunities to make decisions about how to present their work in a variety of ways and choose which side of a debate they support based on their own opinions and research. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to influence the wider life of the school.

The school ensures that pupils learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. They learn about the life of St David, explore the work of Welsh artists and create paintings of Welsh landmarks and castles they visit. The school places importance on providing a rich and varied range of visits to engage pupils in their learning. They visit Caerphilly Castle, for example, to learn about the history of Wales and Cilfynydd Water Centre to discover what lies on the riverbed.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles appropriately. For example, pupils learn about the negative impacts of smoking and how the way we view ourselves and others has an impact on mental health. The outdoor play equipment is very popular with pupils, and regular opportunities to take part in activities such as baseball and swimming benefit pupils' physical development. Visits to outdoor education centres provide opportunities for pupils to improve their teamwork, confidence and resilience. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and imagination. Younger pupils for example create soundscapes to represent the characters in the story of Jack and the beanstalk. Older pupils invent slime potions and use a green screen to market their wares. Throughout the school, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills to express themselves and to refine techniques to produce exceptional work. This creative ethos has a significant influence on the well-being of pupils. The school's curriculum thoughtfully and sensitively supports pupils' understanding of human rights and provides opportunities for them to think deeply about how these rights make a difference to people across the world.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely and works with parents to reduce persistent absenteeism. Pupils have opportunities to learn about how to keep

themselves safe, for example through the school's approach to relationships education and lessons about internet safety. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders at Holy Family Roman Catholic Primary School have created a calm and inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging. Together with pupils, parents, staff and governors, they have developed a clear vision for learning and wellbeing. The vision is focused on working closely with families to foster a love of learning and to deepen pupils' understanding of their faith.

The headteacher demonstrates strong and insightful leadership and is well supported by senior leaders to bring about improvement. Leaders, teachers and support staff are highly effective in developing and maintaining positive relationships across the whole school community. Staff feel especially valued and listened to, and parents are extremely appreciative of the communication and support the school provides. Leaders and teachers prioritise support for families who are new to the area, enabling their children to settle easily into school life. They work sensitively with partner organisations to support vulnerable families and to reduce the impact of social disadvantage. These close working relationships contribute to establishing a strong sense of community built on trust and mutual respect.

Leaders know their school well and carefully identify the most appropriate areas for improvement. The school's priorities focus directly on improving provision, care, standards and wellbeing. Leaders purposefully monitor the impact of their improvement strategies on pupils and share their findings with staff. Recently, this has resulted in higher staff expectations of the progress pupils can make in literacy, particularly with speaking and listening, and in writing across the curriculum. Nearly all staff are clear about their role in implementing the school's priorities. Leaders create focused opportunities for staff to work together to reflect on aspects of school development, for example in assessment for learning practice and in developing confident speakers. This collaborative approach encourages teachers to refine their practice and helps to secure good pupil progress in these important skills. However, there are not enough opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge of the curriculum and their approaches to teaching with colleagues.

The school's procedures for performance management are effective. All staff have access to relevant learning opportunities which link closely with school improvement priorities and support their professional development. As a result, staff develop a wealth of skills, which improve outcomes for all pupils. For example, the strength of pupils' digital skills is a direct result of well-planned professional learning for staff.

The governing body is knowledgeable, holds leaders to account appropriately and supports the school effectively. Most governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. They participate in monitoring activities, such as learning walks, alongside teachers to develop their understanding further. Their hands on experience of the school's work enables them to make significant contributions to better support the needs of pupils, for example in securing suitable arrangements for transition. Leaders plan appropriately to address local and national priorities. Including planning for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales,

additional learning needs reform and support for developing the Welsh language. The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors monitor spending plans and their impact rigorously. They allocate grant funding, including the pupil deprivation grant, effectively to support identified pupils' learning and well-being needs. The school employs skilful support staff to deliver a range of interventions to ensure that all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their learning. Leaders and governors establish a strong safeguarding culture at Holy Family RC Primary school. They ensure that the learning experiences they provide help develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

## 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](http://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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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