



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

A report on

Corpus Christi Catholic High School

**Ty Draw Road
Lisvane
Cardiff
CF23 6XL**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Corpus Christi Catholic High School

Name of provider	Corpus Christi Catholic High School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	1076
Pupils of statutory school age	1076
Number in sixth form	
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 Secondary is 20.2%)	15.1%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 17.8%)	5.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2015
Start date of inspection	06/03/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Corpus Christi Catholic High School seeks to enrich pupils' lives through faith and extremely high-quality care, support and guidance. This is a notable strength of the school and contributes positively to pupils' well-being, behaviour and engagement in learning. Pupils enjoy being at school and achieve well.

Senior leaders ensure that all members of the school community place pupil and staff well-being at the heart of all that they do. The school has developed strong relationships with a wide variety of partners to broker the best possible support for pupils. It has developed highly effective approaches to support pupils in overcoming barriers to learning. There are robust procedures in place that keep all pupils safe, and the culture of safeguarding permeates throughout the school.

In collaboration with its partner primary schools, the school has developed a clear vision for the development of Curriculum for Wales. The importance of good teaching and subject knowledge is at the core of this vision and leaders are developing valuable learning opportunities for pupils. Generally, teachers have suitably high expectations for pupils and ensure helpful levels of challenge and support in the classroom. The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The provision for digital skills is at an early stage of development and currently the school does not promote the use of the Welsh language strongly enough in areas other than Welsh lessons.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders have established a culture of collaboration and mutual respect based on Catholic values. They foster a sense of pride in the school that is shared by all staff and pupils and promote successfully a community where all are supported to achieve.

The school has developed its processes for self-evaluation and planning for improvement suitably. However, a few aspects of self-evaluation lack precision, particularly in teaching and learning, and this means that departmental and whole-school priorities for improvement tend to be too broad.

Recommendations

- R1 Refine self-evaluation so that it identifies precisely any aspects of teaching and learning that need improvement
- R2 Increase the range of opportunities for pupils to practise their Welsh language and digital skills

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 a case study on its work in relation to reducing barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils by raising aspiration, supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being, and developing their literacy and numeracy skills, as part of its pupil-centred ExCel intervention, targeting the most disaffected learners, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. They recall prior learning well and use this understanding in new contexts to further their learning. In a few instances, where pupils do not engage sufficiently with their learning, or where there are shortcomings in teaching, they make less progress. Many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make secure progress from their starting points.

Most pupils listen with respect and attention to their peers and teachers, and use a suitable spoken vocabulary. They share their opinions confidently, although a few make only brief contributions to class discussions. A minority use a sophisticated vocabulary to successfully articulate their thoughts, for example on Dickens' use of characters in 'A Christmas Carol' to comment on the problems of Victorian society. Other pupils demonstrate a thorough understanding of subject terminology when, for instance, they carefully explain the consecutive steps they would take to solve a complex probability problem in mathematics.

Many pupils successfully read texts to understand, locate and select relevant information. A few do so with Spanish language texts too. A notable strength is many pupils' development and independent use of inference, which helps them to appreciate the work of travel writers like Bill Bryson for instance. Their close attention to language allows them to appreciate authorial intent and infer layers of meaning successfully.

Most pupils write for a good range of purposes and audiences. Many produce writing that is technically secure and suitably structured, including responses to literary texts and when making predictions and drawing conclusions in their science investigations. While most pupils understand the purpose of their writing well, a minority are not as secure in their sense of audience. Consequently, they make incorrect language choices, and their writing lacks the correct tone. Often, pupils improve the content, structure and accuracy of their writing through critical self-reflection and responding to constructive feedback from teachers or peers. A few pupils do not take sufficient notice of teachers' feedback and continue to make basic errors in their writing, including a loss of control through comma-splicing and mixing tenses.

Many pupils have secure number skills. They use the four rules confidently and convert between fractions, decimals, and percentages fluently. For example, pupils use their understanding of equivalent fractions when using probabilities to calculate the expected number of successes in a certain number of trials. Many pupils have a sound understanding of shapes and measures. They convert successfully between different units and can calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes that involve parts of a circle. A similar proportion of pupils understand how to collect data well, for example when planning to investigate how temperature effects the growth of bacteria. They draw a range of different graphs accurately, and the majority analyse their graphs to identify trends and draw conclusions. For example, in their geography lessons, pupils analyse the trends in the emission of sulphur dioxide from Mount St Helens and explain what these trends show in geographical terms. A few pupils do

not have a secure enough understanding of number. They struggle with mental calculations. In a minority of instances pupils do not analyse graphs and data well enough to come to sensible conclusions.

In their Welsh lessons, pupils make good progress in their ability to communicate in Welsh. However, pupils have limited opportunities to practice their spoken Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons, which restricts their progress in this area.

Opportunities for pupils to use their digital skills are limited, though many develop their creative skills well in a variety of subjects. For example, in art and in design technology, pupils explore and organise ideas and materials to produce well-considered and proficiently made final pieces.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

At Corpus Christi Catholic High School, most pupils feel safe and happy. They know who to turn to if they have any problems and feel well cared for. Most show great respect and are courteous towards visitors, staff and their peers. Pupils are keen to take on roles during group work, listen to the contributions of others, and many express their opinions confidently and with maturity. Pupils take pride in mentoring younger peers and supporting any who have been involved in disagreements.

Most pupils arrive promptly to lessons, are ready to learn, and sustain their concentration. They behave very well in lessons, assemblies and around the school during break and lunchtimes. This contributes well to the learning ethos of the school, and in many lessons, pupils demonstrate high levels of interest in their work. They listen attentively to instructions, and many respond purposefully to written feedback from teachers. In a few instances, pupils do not take sufficient pride in the presentation of their work.

Many pupils value their relationships with teachers and feel they are listened to including their suggestions for school improvements and which charities to support. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their experiences of teaching and learning are at an early stage of development. The school and faith council has influenced changes regarding well-being such as the provision of more external seating for pupils to enjoy during breaktimes.

Pupils enjoy and value the beneficial range of extra-curricular opportunities available to develop their physical skills during lunchtime and after school. They also enjoy taking part in various performances such as concerts, shows and liturgies during the school year.

The recent introduction of a rewards and sanctions system is valued by pupils who recognise the importance of positive attitudes to learning. They consider carefully how they save and use their reward points, including making charitable donations.

Many pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of how to be ethical and informed citizens. This includes their participation in discussions during 'Wellbeing Wednesday' sessions when they address current news topics and how to manage their own and others' well-being. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school

meals is lower than that of other pupils. However, all pupils benefit from appropriate support and understand the importance of good attendance.

Teaching and learning experiences

Most teachers successfully create a calm and purposeful learning environment. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement and foster positive working relationships with them. These teachers present as good language models and develop effective routines that ensure pupils settle to their work quickly.

In many cases where pupils make good progress, teachers plan carefully what they want pupils to learn, and provide them with activities that build purposefully on previous learning. They use a variety of approaches that engage pupils well and develop both their subject understanding and their skills. These teachers provide clear explanations and model their expectations effectively. They question pupils well to check their knowledge and recall. These teachers often circulate the classroom to monitor progress closely, and provide encouraging and valuable verbal feedback that helps pupils improve their work.

In a few instances where, teaching is particularly strong, teachers have a passion for their subject, and use their expert subject knowledge to inspire pupils. They foresee what pupils will find difficult and plan a series of activities which build pupils' learning sequentially. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and when pupils are ready, they provide them with challenging opportunities to embed and apply their understanding and skills. These teachers ask probing questions, which deepen pupils' understanding, challenge them to develop their verbal responses and ensure that their thinking focuses sharply on the intended learning.

In a few cases, where teaching is not as strong, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. This is usually because teachers plan more for what they want pupils to do rather than what they want them to learn. These teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently or in small groups, or do not monitor pupils' progress closely enough to identify and address misconceptions.

In many instances, teachers' feedback leads to pupils making improvements in their knowledge, understanding and skills. These teachers' comments identify precisely what pupils need to do to improve, and they ensure that pupils respond purposefully to the advice provided.

Pupils' progress is tracked well to identify those who are underachieving. The school provides a broad range of support for these pupils' individual needs.

Leaders have consulted widely with stakeholders to develop a common and clear vision for the development of Curriculum for Wales. This vision is underpinned by a strong focus on effective teaching and an emphasis on the development of pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills. Leaders have worked effectively with their partner primary schools to develop the progression of pupils' learning. Areas of learning and experience (AOLE) co-ordinators collaborate well to identify worthwhile cross-curricular opportunities, such as the information and communication technology (ICT) and design technology departments delivering a robotics project.

The school's curriculum meets the needs and interests of almost all pupils. There is a valuable range of options at Key Stage 4, including additional mathematics and triple science together with vocational courses in finance and hospitality. Pupils receive valuable support when making their GCSE options and are supported well to make choices which suit their individual needs. Leaders consider pupils' views carefully to ensure that as many pupils as possible can study their chosen subjects.

There is a broad range of worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills in relevant subjects. The skills co-ordinators work well with departments to ensure that tasks are meaningful and appropriate. They have provided suitable training and resources to staff to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of skills. The school uses a range of baseline tests and information to identify pupils who require support with basic literacy and numeracy. The interventions provided support these pupils well and help them make secure progress. The school has audited and planned suitably for the development of pupils' digital skills though currently there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop them across the curriculum.

The school's curriculum is enriched through numerous educational visits including a geography trip to Italy and visits to the local synagogue and mosque. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities including numerous sports and academic clubs. In addition, the school provides pupils with the opportunity to perform in school productions and to sing in local residential homes.

The useful personal and social education (PSE) programme reflects relevant contemporary issues and information gathered from pupil wellbeing surveys. This is enhanced through the 'Wellbeing Wednesday' discussions and work with external partners, which supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills well.

The school has a suitable approach to develop pupils' appreciation of Welsh culture through a variety of activities including celebrating Shwmae Su'mae Day, Dydd Santes Dwynwen and the school Eisteddfod for Years 7 and 8. Pupils have a few opportunities to use Welsh in school, for example during registration period as they offer the collective prayer, although opportunities to use the Welsh language outside of Welsh lessons are limited.

The school has appointed a diversity ambassador who works well with departments to develop and embed worthwhile opportunities to support pupils in developing their understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. The school also celebrates the diverse culture of its community when. For example, pupils dress in their national costumes on World Languages Day.

Care, support and guidance

Corpus Christi Catholic High School is a caring and nurturing community. The school has established a clear vision for pupil and staff well-being, which is underpinned by its Catholic ethos and centred upon all members of the school community being attentive, compassionate and truthful. Leaders and staff promote this vision consistently and pupils appreciate the high levels of support they receive. Purposeful and respectful working relationships between staff and pupils, and powerful tailored

support for vulnerable learners, have created an environment where pupils feel safe and happy.

Leaders are passionate about caring for all pupils. They have developed many worthwhile strategies to support pupils' well-being and address a wide range of emotional and mental health issues. For example, the school has employed a trained nurse who provides mental health first aid and refers particularly vulnerable pupils to the relevant external support. Leaders work successfully with a wide range of external partners, including the local authority, the local health board, and various charities to ensure that pupils are supported well. This is a notable feature of the school's work.

The school has strengthened its focus on tackling barriers to learning and has developed valuable strategies to re-engage and raise the aspirations of the most disaffected pupils. Following the pandemic, the school introduced the 'ExCEL Programme', a highly successful and creative approach that focuses specifically on improving targeted pupils' attitudes to learning and developing the skills they need to make good progress. The school has also developed a useful approach to supporting persistent absentees through its 'Emotional Based School Avoidance' intervention. A strategy to monitor attendance and manage interventions more widely has recently been introduced as part of the school's continuing work to improve pupils' attendance.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development effectively. The PSE programme is well established and is delivered through discrete well-being lessons, form time activities and across relevant areas of the curriculum. The PSE provision is reviewed regularly and considers current issues such as toxic masculinity.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong and its impact is evaluated regularly, through careful self-evaluation and robust tracking of pupil progress against personalised targets. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) has made considerable progress in implementing the Additional Learning Needs Tribunal Act (ALNET). She leads an effective team and through training and clear communication ensures that staff share her vision for meeting the needs of all pupils. This team has developed highly effective relationships with parents and listens to pupils' views through worthwhile person-centred reviews. Pupils with ALN are supported well by the school in partnership with Careers Wales. This helps them move forward successfully at the end of their time in the school.

Senior leaders ensure that all members of the school community understand and foster a culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding team provide useful and regular training to help staff respond to any concerns diligently and promptly. The school works very effectively with external agencies when responding to child protection concerns. There are thorough and appropriate arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff and others who are in contact with pupils.

The school has an effective positive relationships policy which provides staff with valuable structures to deal with any disruptive behaviour. Incidents of alleged bullying are investigated promptly, and the school maintains effective communication with parents and carers. The school seeks the views of pupils regularly to refine and

improve the implementation of their well-being strategy, which contributes to pupils feeling safe and happy in school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear and well-defined vision for the school focused on fostering a culture of equity and promoting the Catholic ethos. This strong sense of moral purpose is shared by leaders and staff, permeates all aspects of the school's work and is fundamental in creating a caring community that supports success for all pupils.

The headteacher and his senior team work well together. They promote and model positive behaviours effectively and have high expectations for themselves, staff and pupils. Since his appointment, the headteacher has reorganised leadership structures and processes so they align more efficiently with the school's priorities. He has restructured leadership roles so that responsibilities are shared equitably and has streamlined the processes for meetings so that time is used more productively. Leaders have managed these changes with particular sensitivity to ensure that individuals are supported to develop their skills. The headteacher has tackled any instances of underperformance robustly, but in the same caring manner. This has contributed to a strong sense of loyalty and collegiality amongst staff.

Leaders at all levels understand their roles well. Middle leaders value the support provided by senior colleagues and work with dedication towards meeting the school's priorities. Performance management arrangements are suitable and supportive, and provide ample opportunities for pertinent professional learning.

Partnership working is a significant strength. The school has developed strong links with its partner primary schools and the sixth form college to support effective transition for pupils and curriculum continuity. Leaders forge productive relationships with a number of organisations to support the school's ambition to be community focused.

Governors are experienced and very supportive of the school. They demonstrate a strong moral duty to make a difference to pupils' life chances and to their local community. They challenge appropriately and are deepening their understanding of the school's work. Governors pay appropriate attention to the arrangements for pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

The headteacher works closely with the business manager to ensure that spending plans align closely with the school's priorities. Despite the school's best efforts and appropriate plans being in place to improve facilities, the current canteen, toilets and boys' changing rooms are unsuitable due mainly to the growing number of pupils on roll. Grant monies are used effectively, and the school is proactive and creative in seeking sources of income. The school uses its pupil development grant to fund a range of appropriate activities to tackle the impact of disadvantage. Leaders evaluate these strategies carefully using the school's tracking systems.

Over time, the school has made improvements to its self-evaluation processes and has developed a suitable suite of systematic approaches focused on evaluation and impact. Senior leaders support middle leaders well to gather evidence to inform

improvement planning. This has helped to improve aspects of the school's work such as feedback to pupils. Middle leaders reflect thoughtfully on their areas of responsibility. They analyse data in detail to identify strengths and areas for development in outcomes. In the most effective cases, this data is used alongside observations of pupils' progress in lessons and in their work to provide a helpful picture of pupils' learning. However, overall, although whole-school and departmental quality assurance is generally evaluative, it does not focus precisely enough on the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. In particular, there is not a strong enough consideration of the relationship between teaching approaches and pupils' progress. Furthermore, a few quality assurance processes tend to focus on aspects of compliance at the expense of effectiveness. This means that priorities at departmental and whole school level are not specific enough to enable the school to make refinements, for example in specific aspects of teaching.

Leaders have established a strategic approach to professional learning. This is underpinned by clearly understood principles to ensure it supports whole-school improvement priorities effectively. Development opportunities, including sharing good practice, are identified through quality assurance processes and staff consultation to ensure they also meet the needs of subject areas and individual staff. There are tailored opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills through formal courses and in-school support. Leaders have convened several working groups to develop approaches to specific school priorities such as Curriculum for Wales and teaching. These have provided valuable developmental opportunities for staff. Professional learning to support the development of teaching has resulted in a helpful shared language for teachers to discuss their practice. Leaders evaluate these opportunities suitably and adapt approaches as required. Consequently, professional learning has a positive impact on important aspects of the school's work, in particular the quality of teaching, and is valued highly by staff.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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 (<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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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