

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on:

Wyclif Independent Christian School
Ebenezer Baptist Chapel
Wyndham Street
Machen
Caerphilly
CF83 8PU

Date of inspection: December 2012

by

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







During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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Context

Wycliff Independent Christian School is a co-educational independent day school. It was founded in 1982 and is now situated on three separate sites, including Ebenezer Chapel and St John's Hall in the village of Machen, near Caerphilly. The school's aim is to provide an education founded on Christian values and teaching, based upon the fundamental truths of Christianity as revealed in the Bible. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and represent a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The school caters for pupils aged 4 to 18 and is divided into three sections. The primary section is for pupils from Reception to Year 5. The middle school section includes pupils in Year 6 to Year 8 and the senior section caters for pupils in Year 9 to Year 13. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils has almost doubled to the current total of 129. This includes 61 pupils aged 4 to 11 and 68 pupils aged 12 to 18.

Approximately 3% of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register.

Around 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language.

The school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh.

The school has six full-time teachers and 13 part-time teachers.

Since the last inspection in 2006, the school has acquired additional premises and extended its provision to cater for a few post-16 students. In 2011, a new deputy headteacher was appointed.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory

Current performance

The good features of the school's work include:

- pupils' attainment in public examinations at key stage 4 and post-16;
- the good progress that most pupils make in extending their knowledge and understanding, and developing their subject-based skills;
- pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their well-developed personal and social skills:
- the effective arrangements to support pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of contexts;
- constructive working relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils, which contribute to a positive learning atmosphere; and
- the high level of care for pupils in a close and supportive community that contributes significantly to their wellbeing and learning.

However, current performance is judged as adequate overall because:

- provision for physical education across the school and for the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills in the primary school and middle school restricts pupils' progress in these areas;
- there are limited opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities, in particular sporting activities, on a regular basis;
- in a significant minority of lessons, there are shortcomings in the quality of teaching; and
- arrangements for assessment, target-setting and tracking pupils' progress lack rigour.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- senior teachers do not provide clear strategic direction about core aspects of the school's work;
- the school does not systematically manage the performance of staff to support them to improve their practice:
- self-evaluation procedures lack rigour and do not provide a robust and accurate evidence-based analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development; and
- the school development plan is not an effective tool to secure improvement.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should ensure that:

- it takes regard of National Assembly guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers in schools (3.4); and
- it has a satisfactory level of fire safety (3.5).

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Take steps to comply fully with the regulations for registration;
- R2 improve provision for physical education and for developing pupils' information and communication technology skills;
- R3 improve the quality of teaching to match best practice in the school, and in particular to ensure that all pupils are challenged to reach their full potential;
- R4 develop more robust assessment, target-setting and tracking procedures and ensure greater consistency in the quality of marking;
- R5 strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and strategic management across the school; and
- R6 establish systematic and robust self-evaluation and improvement planning arrangements.

What happens next?

Since the school does not meet some of the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the governors to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan must set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step. Estyn advises the governors to amend the current development plan to show what action the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Pupils' attainment in public examinations at key stage 4 and post-16 is good.

At key stage 4, the percentage of pupils attaining the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has been well above averages for schools in Wales in each of the last three years. Performance in the level 2 threshold and in the core subject indicator has also been well above national averages in this period. In 2012, around half of all GCSE entries were awarded the highest A*/A grades while 83% of entries were at grades A*-C. In English and in each of the separate sciences, all entries were at grades A*-C. In each of the previous two years, more than 91% of entries were at grades A*-C.

In the sixth form, students perform well. In 2012, all A level entries were awarded grades A*-E with 83% of entries awarded grades A*-C.

Across the school, there are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress relative to their abilities.

In the last three years, no pupil has left the school without a qualification. In the last two years, no pupils who left school at 16 are reported as being not in education, employment and training. This proportion is better than local authority and Wales averages.

In many lessons, most pupils make good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding, and developing their subject-related skills. They recall previous learning well and use this effectively, for example to appreciate new concepts, draw links, make predictions and solve problems. More able pupils often ask perceptive questions to extend their understanding and to challenge particular viewpoints or theories. In a few lessons, pupils do not make enough progress largely because learning activities do not challenge them enough.

Most pupils have good listening skills. They listen attentively to teachers' explanations and the views of other pupils and, as they move through the school, are able to understand issues that are often complex. Many pupils speak confidently and clearly when answering questions or offering their opinions. More able pupils are thoughtful and articulate when contributing to group or class discussions. A few pupils are less confident and provide brief responses that lack detail.

Pupils in the primary and middle schools develop their reading skills well. They show increasing accuracy, fluency and understanding and are able to retrieve information effectively from a range of sources. As they progress through the senior school, most pupils read with increasing expression and poise. They use a range of strategies to select and synthesise relevant information and use this well to make considered judgements and solve problems.

In the primary school, most pupils acquire secure writing skills. Many write neatly and accurately using appropriate sentence structures. They use an increasingly wide vocabulary to express their ideas, convey meaning effectively and produce interesting and well-structured narrative. As they move through the middle and senior schools, many pupils spell accurately, apply punctuation and grammar appropriately and write in a range of forms. Most construct increasingly complex sentences and organise these appropriately into coherent paragraphs. In the senior school, more able pupils produce persuasive arguments using a range of evidence to support their views and opinions. However, most pupils are less successful in developing their creative writing skills. In a few lessons, pupils rely too much on teachers' guidance to produce written accounts.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe in school and know that they have someone to talk to if they have any concerns about their wellbeing. They are confident that their concerns will be dealt with appropriately.

Pupils have positive attitudes to healthy living and eating. They enjoy participating in physical activities as part of the curriculum and in occasional events, such as the three-day outdoor pursuits camp for key stage 2 pupils. These activities help pupils to develop their self-confidence and social skills well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and adults, and are welcoming to visitors. In lessons, pupils of all ages are well motivated and engaged. They show interest, apply themselves well to their learning and respond positively to the teaching. Pupils are punctual to their lessons and attendance for the past three years has been above the national average. During this time, there have been no permanent exclusions.

Pupils take on a range of age-appropriate responsibilities in the school and wider community. For example, older pupils mentor younger pupils in reading in English lessons and developing oral skills in Spanish. Pupils are particularly caring towards each other and, when working together, they are respectful of other pupils' views. However, they do not have enough opportunities to be involved in decision-making or to influence the school's work.

Pupils are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their learning and life outside school.

Key Question 2: How good is provision? Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum that meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. The curriculum gives strong emphasis to English, mathematics and science.

The primary and middle schools follow a faith-based, commercially-produced curriculum programme. This programme, which uses textbooks and materials that reflect Christian values and biblical principles, promotes the school's aims and ethos

well and generally enables pupils to make sound progress in their learning. The senior school provides pupils with an appropriate choice of GCSE and A level courses that enable pupils of all abilities to progress to the next stage of their learning. However, throughout the school, there is not enough time allocated to physical education for pupils to achieve good standards.

In each section of the school, there are effective arrangements to support pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of contexts. As a result, pupils achieve high standards in these areas. However, provision for the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills in the primary and middle schools is limited and does not allow for suitable progression as these pupils move through the school.

The school's enrichment programme includes a limited range of useful activities, such as the drama club, exchange visits and opportunities for younger pupils to participate in Welsh language lessons. These contribute well to pupils' educational and social development. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities, in particular sporting activities, on a regular basis.

Pupils throughout the school have appropriate opportunities to learn about the historical, cultural and modern context of Wales. For example, as part of the curriculum pupils visit the Senedd to develop a greater understanding of governance in Wales. Pupils also participate actively in projects that support the school's strong links with schools in developing countries, for example through charity fund-raising and volunteer exchange visits. This helps pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world well.

Teaching: Adequate

In all sections of the school, teachers know the pupils well. Constructive working relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils contribute to a positive learning atmosphere in lessons.

Teachers generally use questioning well and frequently engage in high-quality discussions with pupils to enable them to express their views, improve their speaking skills and develop their understanding. In around half of lessons, where teaching is good or better, well-designed learning activities stimulate pupils' interest, provide a suitable level of challenge and help them to make good progress. This is a particularly common feature in the primary school. Generally, teachers use their sound subject knowledge effectively to engage and challenge pupils to make progress. Teachers explain new concepts clearly and introduce new vocabulary skilfully.

However, in a significant minority of lessons, although pupils make satisfactory progress, they could achieve more. This is most commonly because the pace of the lesson is too slow and there is too much teacher-directed learning. In these lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to take part in group or pair work or to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers do not plan learning activities appropriately to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities, in particular to challenge more able pupils.

Standardised tests in reading, spelling and numeracy provide useful information to help track pupils' progress and identify those who need additional support to improve these skills. In many lessons, teachers provide helpful verbal feedback to pupils on the quality of their work. However, there is not a consistent whole-school approach to assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and identifying appropriate learning targets. Across the school, teachers' marking is not consistent enough and comments, while generally supportive, do not give pupils a clear indication of the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve.

In all sections of the school, parents receive annual reports about their child's progress. In the primary school, these reports provide helpful information about the work pupils have covered during the year and also give an indication of their achievements and progress in each area of learning. Reports for pupils in the middle and senior schools include grades for effort and, where relevant, an indication of current GCSE or other course assessment grades. Overall, reports focus strongly on pupils' enthusiasm and effort but do not provide enough information about how they can improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a high level of care for pupils. This contributes significantly to their wellbeing and learning. The small class sizes and strong links with parents help to promote a caring and supportive family atmosphere in which staff know their pupils well and respond to their individual needs appropriately.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. In particular, the school offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to develop their spirituality. This includes regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own religious beliefs and consider fundamental questions about the Christian faith, life and the world around them.

Across the school, staff promote strongly the importance of clear moral values and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in and outside the classroom. Activities such as pupils developing the monthly character trait, which includes qualities such as kindness and generosity, help to reinforce pupils' personal and social development well. Pupils understand clearly and respect the school's rewards and sanctions system, which helps to encourage them to accept responsibility for the actions they take.

The curriculum provides pupils with a comprehensive age-appropriate understanding of healthy living.

The school makes effective use of a range of specialist services to support pupils' educational needs. This includes a specialist careers advisor to help older pupils make well-informed choices about their study or work options.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is effective. There is a well-established system for the identification, provision of support and monitoring of these pupils' learning needs. The school conducts regular reviews of pupils' progress and carries out appropriate annual reviews. These arrangements enable pupils with additional learning needs to achieve well.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

Through all aspects of its work, the school promotes a strong Christian ethos that underpins an inclusive and caring community where all are valued equally and respected. There are suitable opportunities for all pupils to participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Despite the fact that two of the buildings are owned by local churches and not designed for educational purposes, the school makes generally good use of its limited accommodation. All three buildings are maintained in a reasonable condition. The primary school building is utilised well. Dedicated areas and resources have a positive impact on the quality of learning, especially for the youngest pupils. Similarly, in the middle school, helpful wall displays in teaching areas enhance the learning environment. However, in senior classrooms there is very little display of pupils' work. Occasionally, in the middle and senior schools where large teaching spaces are shared, background noise from other users distracts pupils from learning.

The well-designed primary outdoor area provides appropriate play opportunities for younger pupils. The school also makes good use of a local sports centre for physical education lessons. However, the limited outdoor space is a significant disadvantage for pupils of all ages.

Overall, across the school pupils have access to a suitable range of learning resources. However, there are no computers available for lower primary-age children and apart from the information and communication technology suite there is limited access to computers in the senior school. These arrangements restrict opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management? Adequate

Leadership: Adequate

All staff are strongly committed to the school's vision to provide a Christian education within a caring and disciplined environment. The headteacher has been particularly successful in promoting this shared sense of purpose that helps to sustain a nurturing ethos where staff, parents and pupils feel valued and work well together. This has contributed significantly to the good standards pupils achieve and their high levels of wellbeing.

The headteacher and senior staff have successfully led the school through the recent period of significant growth. They have extended and improved the accommodation, broadened the curriculum and increased the number of teachers. Through this period of change, these senior leaders have maintained the strong sense of a cohesive community within the school. They have also ensured that across the curriculum there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills.

There are suitable arrangements to ensure that the school operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Weekly meetings ensure that staff are well informed about forthcoming events and specific issues relating to individual pupils. However, senior teachers do not provide firm strategic direction about core aspects of the school's work. For example, they do not set out clear expectations to improve the quality of teaching, identify challenging targets for pupils or establish consistent assessment and monitoring arrangements that support pupils to make progress. As a result, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and assessment across the school.

The school does not systematically manage the performance of staff to support them to improve their practice although the school is developing its procedures to mentor new teachers and those in need of specific support.

Governors provide valuable support to the school, in particular in relation to safeguarding and additional learning needs. They make useful contributions to staff training, and review and update school policies regularly. The new governor-teacher buddy system gives teachers a clear avenue to raise issues to be discussed by the governing body. However, governors do not hold the school to account well enough regarding the standards and quality it achieves.

The school complies with almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. A very few health and safety issues were reported to the school.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

Self-evaluation procedures lack rigour and are not an established feature of the school's routine. Senior teachers do not analyse performance data robustly, scrutinise pupils' work regularly or observe teaching directly. As a result, senior teachers have limited first-hand evidence about the quality of teaching and the standards pupils achieve in lessons across the school.

The self-evaluation report written prior to inspection does not provide a comprehensive and robust assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, it gives a general overview of what the school does well and identifies a few areas to improve.

The school development plan is not an effective tool to secure improvement. It does not give appropriate emphasis to raising standards or improving provision and the quality of leadership. The plan does not set out precise actions to support improvement, or clear timescales and criteria to help staff and governors to judge the impact of initiatives. As a result, there is no shared understanding of the school's priorities for improvement.

The school has taken appropriate steps since the last inspection to comply with the regulations for registration and to improve certain aspects of provision. However, progress has been too slow in addressing key recommendations to improve self-evaluation arrangements, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership.

Staff are beginning to discuss and promote best practice more openly within the school. Teachers in the primary school use peer observation well to learn from each other and to develop more effective teaching approaches, but this is not a whole-school strategy.

Partnership working: Good

The school's partnership activities make a substantial contribution to its life and work and benefit pupils significantly, most notably through enhancing the quality of provision and improving their wellbeing.

The school fosters a strong partnership with parents. Parents have considerable trust in, and are very supportive of, the school's work. They particularly value the close communication with staff and appreciate the extent to which the school takes note of their views. Many parents make an active contribution to the life of the school. They give their time enthusiastically to support the school in a variety of ways, for example in assisting with events and trips, listening to pupils read and supervising them around the school, as well as assisting with maintenance of the premises.

The school works well with a range of agencies, organisations and specialist services to support pupils' learning and wellbeing. For example, there is an effective partnership with a careers organisation that helps pupils to make appropriate subject choices and identify the most suitable further education routes at the end of key stage 4, in preparation for possible future careers.

The school has productive links with other Christian communities in Poland, Germany and Spain and organises exchange visits with these communities that help broaden pupils' learning experiences and develop their personal and social skills.

Resource management: Good

There are enough suitably qualified staff to deliver the school's curriculum effectively. Teachers are deployed appropriately to make best use of their expertise and experience although this is not always in their specialist areas. The school does not identify professional development needs through systematic performance management arrangements. However, there are useful opportunities for staff to access relevant training, which addresses school or subject priorities, either as part of the school's in-service programme or through external providers.

The deputy head and a member of the governing body manage the school's budget carefully. They monitor all expenditure closely and have been able to maintain balanced budgets. As a result, the school has improved its resources and accommodation significantly in recent years, particularly through acquiring and adapting additional premises and developing the primary school play area.

The school makes effective use of its resources to achieve good outcomes for its pupils and provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 56 learners, selected at random from across the age range. Overall, learners' responses are slightly less positive than national benchmarks.

Nearly all learners state that they feel safe in school. Most believe that the school deals well with bullying. All primary-age learners who completed the survey and many secondary-age learners indicate that they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. Many say that other learners behave well.

Almost all learners consider that they are doing well. All primary-age learners and most secondary-age learners say that staff help them to make progress and help them when they have problems. Most say that they are encouraged to take responsibility and many feel well prepared for further education or employment.

Many learners say that homework helps them to understand and improve their work and believe that they have enough books and equipment.

Many learners state that the school teaches them to be healthy. Many primary-age learners and the majority of secondary-age learners say that there are plenty of opportunities to get regular exercise.

Many learners confirm that staff treat them fairly and with respect while nearly all indicate that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds.

The majority of learners feel the school takes account of their views.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 48 responses to the parent questionnaire. Of those that responded, most parents gave a positive or very positive response to almost all questions. Overall, parents' responses were slightly more positive than national benchmarks.

Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and most believe that it is well run. They indicate that their children are safe and like the school, and state that their children were helped to settle in well when they started school. Most parents believe that pupils behave well and that staff treat all children fairly and with respect.

Almost all parents believe that their children are making good progress. They say that teaching is good, and that staff expect their children to work hard and do their best. Almost all parents say that homework reinforces learning and that staff support their children well. Most parents feel that their children are well prepared for moving on to the next school or college or work.

Most parents consider that there is a good range of extra-curricular activities and trips, and say that their children are encouraged to be healthy.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

John Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Denise Wade	Team Inspector
Jassa Scott	Team Inspector
Gregory Owens	Team Inspector
Adam England	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at aged 16 or at aged 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at aged 16.
Proprietor	The term 'proprietor', as defined in the Education Act 1996, means the person or people responsible for managing an independent school and can include a sole proprietor, governing bodies, trustees or directors. The ways that independent schools are governed and owned varies a great deal. A proprietor or trust may own a school or the school may have a governing body that appoints a headteacher. Some schools have a combination of these.