



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

**A report on**

**St Oswald's VA School**

**Narberth  
Pembrokeshire  
SA67 8HB**

**Date of inspection: June 2023**

**by**

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

## About St Oswalds VA School

Name of provider	St Oswald's VA School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Voluntary aided church in Wales.
Number of pupils on roll	142
Pupils of statutory school age	109
Number in nursery classes	23
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	7.3%
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 16.1%)	21.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/02/2015
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023

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](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

St Oswald's Voluntary Aided Primary School is a nurturing place for pupils, staff and visitors. All pupils and their families receive a sincere welcome. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be a part of such a reassuring learning environment. Teachers and support staff are always there to help when needed. The headteacher, teachers and support staff take very good care of the pupils and want them to thrive in learning and in life.

Staff offer pupils a variety of school experiences, all of which help to keep pupils interested and make learning exciting. Many pupils make good progress and achieve well. In general, over direction by adults stifles opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and limits their progress, especially pupils who are identified as being more able. This includes when pupils lead and evaluate aspects of their own learning.

The school grounds offer an engaging environment to extend pupils' learning and, at times, teachers plan stimulating outdoor learning activities. Adults provide regular feedback to pupils which enables pupils to correct their work. However, feedback focuses too often on pupils correcting basic mistakes and does not support them to improve their work well enough.

Pupils know that staff expect them to behave well and respect everyone in the school and the community. The engagement of pupils in their learning, and their excellent behaviour, are notable strengths of the school.

The headteacher provides strong and compassionate leadership and knows the school well. He plans a robust cycle of monitoring and evaluation and identifies important areas of the school's work that staff work hard to improve. The headteacher values the opinions of staff, pupils, parents and governors, and uses these to improve the school. The headteacher is ably and enthusiastically supported by the acting deputy headteacher. Staff and senior leaders trust each other to form an effective, successful team.

## Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety issue raised during the inspection
- R2 Strengthen opportunities to develop pupils' independent learning skills including when using the outdoors
- R3 Develop feedback to support pupils to make progress in learning

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Most pupils begin school with levels of understanding and skills at or above those expected for their stage of development. Overall, many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make effective progress from their individual starting points. However, pupils do not always develop their independent learning skills sufficiently and pupils identified as being more able do not always make the expected progress.

Most younger pupils' language skills are well developed. They express themselves well and at times use sophisticated language. For example, they describe the features of a jelly fish using words such as 'transparent, semi-transparent and opaque'. As pupils move through the school, most express their thoughts clearly. The older pupils generate searching questions about photographs based on the Sea Empress oil spill that affected the Pembrokeshire coastline.

Across the school, most pupils' reading skills are at least appropriate for their stage of development. The youngest pupils develop their knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds well. By Year 3 and Year 4, most pupils use strategies to decode unfamiliar words well. They develop their abilities to read words on sight which in turn progresses their capabilities to read with increasing fluency. They recall and identify the main aspects of the text effectively. Older pupils adopt roles to question, summarise and predict well when discussing texts. They read a range of texts including play scripts, newspapers, narratives and journals. Most use punctuation to convey expression and a majority read with fluency.

Many pupils develop their writing skills effectively. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their knowledge of letter symbols and sounds to write simple words organised into well-formed phrases. As pupils move through the school, most write full sentences using capital letters and full stops correctly. As they develop their competence, they write for a variety of purposes, selecting the appropriate style and voice. Many older pupils occasionally write at length. They often produce shorter pieces of writing carefully selecting appropriate vocabulary, in a range of contemporary contexts, for example creating a newspaper report focusing on motoring offences. Many pupils produce neat handwriting and present their work with pride. However, a minority of older pupils do not present their work with care.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about the Welsh language and most pupils' Welsh listening and speaking skills are good. The Captain Cymraeg pupils effectively promote the use of Welsh within each class. Younger pupils respond to simple

instructions correctly and many older pupils can hold simple conversations based on learned patterns using conjunctions to link phrases.

Many pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and skills, especially in their work using number. The youngest pupils use non-standard and standard measures to measure worms they make out of dough and use words such as 'smallest' and 'biggest' to describe the size. Most older pupils independently extrapolate information from graphs. When given the opportunity, many pupils transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts successfully, for instance when creating line graphs to represent the trend of deaths in the navy during World War 2.

Most pupils have strong digital skills, which they apply across the curriculum successfully. The youngest pupils use digital packages to illustrate their work, for example. As pupils move through the school, they create presentations including text and images. The oldest pupils develop their digital skills creatively to create podcasts about saving the coral in our seas.

Pupils engage in creative activities enthusiastically. They select approaches to creatively present their learning, and a very few pupils play musical instruments in the school orchestra. Many pupils develop their physical skills successfully. For example, the youngest pupils hop and skip and begin to catch objects well. As pupils progress, most pupils develop their abilities to refine their physical skills in a variety of engaging activities.

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

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe in school. They enjoy attending school and arrive eager to learn. They know it is important to attend and have strong working relationships with staff and their peers. They value their friendships, and learn and socialise well with each other. Across the school, nearly all pupils consistently demonstrate confidence when speaking to their peers and adults. They are polite and well-mannered, and show respect towards other pupils, staff and visitors.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary in the classrooms. They move around the school purposefully and responsibly, enter and exit the hall for assembly with respect for the experience and engage in the spiritual experience appropriately.

Nearly all pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning. They participate conscientiously in lessons, and they work on their own and collaboratively in their learning, for example when making an obstacle course. Many appreciate the opportunities to share their ideas about what they learn and do so with maturity and confidence.

Nearly all pupils apply themselves positively to new experiences, settle quickly and concentrate for extended periods of time. When moving between tasks they make the transition swiftly. The youngest pupils listen attentively to their teacher and interact respectfully with each other. Older pupils work successfully with their peers in pairs or groups and support each other's learning. Most pupils show perseverance and resilience when completing tasks, such as solving problems in maths. They respond positively to verbal feedback from adults and each other and to written

feedback from adults, when correcting their work. However, pupils do not always understand how to improve their work to make progress in their learning.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They enjoy taking part in physical activities, make sensible choices and have a good understanding of the benefits of diet and movement on their health. For example, pupils discuss their food choices to maintain a healthy diet and understand the benefits this has on longer term health.

Most pupils have a secure understanding of good emotional well-being and know who to speak to if they need help. For example, pupils discuss their emotions in daily 'check ins'. Pupils engage with support staff to successfully help them understand and manage their emotions.

Across the school, pupils are developing well as capable and ambitious learners. They happily share their views and ideas while respectfully accepting the contributions of others. They focus well in lessons and are keen to do their best. Most pupils feel that staff listen to and consider their views when planning their learning. Younger pupils eagerly provide their views, which are included in the following week's learning activities.

Most pupils across the school are developing as ethical citizens. They participate in charity fundraising events, for example the Rainbow Run, organised by the health and well-being group. Most pupils have a solid understanding and knowledge of sustainability. Younger pupils talk confidently about the overuse of plastic and the damage this does to sea life and the ocean. Older pupils look at the impact of salmon fishing on Welsh rivers. The pupil voice groups provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and impact positively on improving school priorities. For example, the weekly 'ambassador hour' provides opportunities for pupils to lead on aspects of various improvement.

Pupils know how to stay safe online. They are clear about the rules they should follow when using the internet and know what to do if they have a concern. The school digital moto is 'Think before you type', which pupils follow conscientiously.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff develop effective working relationships with pupils, which creates a positive and supportive learning environment. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they manage this successfully. This contributes to a calm working environment where pupils feel listened to and feel confident to ask questions if they need help with their learning. Staff know their pupils well, encourage them to participate and praise their efforts while they are working and interacting with their peers. This has a positive effect on pupils' progress and well-being.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that aligns effectively to the vision and principles of the Curriculum for Wales and the school's Christian ethos. Nearly all lessons engage pupils' interests well and motivate them to succeed. In general, teachers ensure that pupils engage in a stimulating range of experiences to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. However, at

times, teachers over direct pupils' learning, which limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

Teachers introduce new curriculum topics with exciting launch days. This is effective in helping pupils generate questions about what they would like to learn, and is beginning to ensure that learning experiences are matched to pupils' interests. At times, teachers plan exciting opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors. However, teachers do not exploit the use of the outdoors to enhance and extend pupils' learning well enough.

Teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that pupils make good progress in their skills through purposeful tasks. There are various opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills by contributing to class discussions and presenting their work to others. Provision for supporting the development of reading skills is good and many pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes across the curriculum. For example, as part of their work on civil rights, pupils research the life and works of influential people. This develops their writing skills appropriately, such as informative writing about Eileen Beazley and Rosa Parks' fight against injustices. However, teachers' expectations regarding pupils' presentation of work are not always high enough, especially with the oldest pupils.

Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their numeracy and digital skills through a range of tasks, and most pupils are confident using technology to enhance their learning. For example, younger pupils record themselves when creating a story about animals during an outdoor learning session. Teachers successfully deploy support staff to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. Support staff work closely with teachers and contribute effectively to pupils' learning experiences. As a result, many pupils make good progress. However, pupils identified as being more able often lack suitable challenge to develop deeper thinking and perseverance skills.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills across the school is effective. Staff are good role models and pupils use Welsh voluntarily and effectively around school, both to each other and to staff and visitors. Many staff use basic Welsh sentence patterns in the classroom, to give instructions to their pupils. As a result, pupils are developing the appropriate and beneficial skills to learning another language.

Teachers ensure a range of worthwhile opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales. For example, they celebrate special events such as the annual Eisteddfod and they visit local places of interest linked to their topics, such as Pembroke Castle and Morfa Bay. They use Welsh artists as a stimulus for their own work, celebrate special days, and learn about influential Welsh citizens. Provision for the teaching of Welsh is a strong feature of the school.

Teachers and support staff are good language role models and many use questioning effectively to extend pupils' responses. As a result, pupils engage well during lessons, and most are keen and enjoy their learning. Nevertheless, on a very few occasions, teachers miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers provide pupils with feedback and written comments, which results in pupils correcting their work. However, teachers' feedback focuses too often on basic mistakes and does not result in pupils improving the quality and standard of their work.

Leaders and teachers make effective use of assessment processes to track pupil progress. There are regular, collaborative pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers, pupils and parents. These help to ensure that all relevant members are aware of the progress pupils are making, which teachers use to inform the next steps in learning.

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

The school provides good support for pupils with ALN. There are clear systems for the identification for pupils needing additional support in learning. Teachers set appropriate targets and use these to inform provision, which they plan effectively to support pupils to make good progress. The school includes parents and encourages them to play a full role in the support around their child. School staff work well with other supportive partners, such as health professionals, and external agencies including educational psychologists, the Early Help Team and behaviour specialist team to benefit pupils' progress.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop leadership roles through pupils applying to join one of the pupil voice groups on offer, such as the eco-council, school council, health and well-being group and criw Cymraeg. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and learn important skills to support their thinking, planning and problem-solving skills. Pupils enjoy sharing the work they do. For example, the health and well-being group presented important information to launch mental health week to the whole school, to raise awareness on how they can access support if they need someone to talk to.

Daily acts of collective worship make valuable contributions to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect on the key messages and values and how they may apply these to their daily lives.

The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities. These opportunities support the development of pupils' social skills and provide a basis for staff to work with pupils within a less formal situation, and support vital knowledge and skills on important topics such as healthy living and well-being. The school promotes these opportunities well through curricular activities, such as the sports clubs and the healthy cooking club.

Staff provide pupils with a range of off-site experiences, which benefit pupils' holistic development. These include residential visits to Llangrannog and Cardiff, and educational visits that include Pembroke Castle where pupils study life in Tudor times and Freshwater West where pupils learn about life in rock pools.

All staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being. Staff support families and work closely with external agencies to challenge and reduce absenteeism and lateness. Leaders have robust systems to investigate and deal with concerns or complaints. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. However, a health and safety concern was raised with the school, which leaders are addressing. Pupils report that incidents of alleged bullying are extremely rare and, as a result, nearly all pupils feel happy and secure. Staff nurture pupils' well-being effectively, which supports them to feel safe in school and ensures that school staff take their concerns seriously.



The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and challenges poor and persistent absence well. The headteacher and family engagement officer have built effective relationships with families and the robust systems are resulting in most pupils having a positive attitude to regularly attending school. Within a short timeframe, the family engagement officer has shown a positive impact on relationships with families at the school. She holds informal, regular coffee mornings and invites professionals to meet with families to discuss the support they can access and signposts families to external support agencies.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher is a strong role model and provides thoughtful and effective leadership. He sets clear expectations for the quality of provision and works alongside staff with dedication. Ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, he has developed an engaged team of staff, who understand their roles and responsibilities and are well supported to develop their practice.

Leaders have a clear vision, which was co-constructed with all stakeholders. As a result, the school successfully provides a welcoming and inclusive ethos. This ensures that nearly all pupils feel a sense of belonging and engage positively with the learning experiences that staff provides.

Following the promotion of key members of staff, the headteacher is redistributing leadership roles. All staff have opportunities to assume responsibilities and to contribute purposefully to the school's development. Leaders create a positive culture and ethos, which promotes and supports the professional learning. All staff are engaged in purposeful activities that support the development of their professional knowledge, understanding, teaching and leadership skills. Performance management processes support this well and staff have ownership of their own professional learning. As a result, staff are keen to seek out opportunities to improve their own practice and share this with colleagues. For example, staff select schools that they wish to visit in order to observe new initiatives and good practice and then share their findings with colleagues in school.

Collaboration with other partner schools in the cluster is strong, as well as working in a triad with two other church schools. As a result, this has had a positive impact on the planning for the Curriculum for Wales and further promoted and enhanced professional learning for all staff.

Leaders use a wide range of approaches to evaluate the school's progress. They use this information to make accurate decisions regarding the quality and impact of provision across the school. This results in accurate identification of the school's improvement priorities.

Monitoring processes are robust and staff work effectively to ensure that progress towards school improvement targets is monitored suitably. As a result, leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the impact of the school's priorities on pupils' learning and the next steps required. Procedures for monitoring activities are clearly timetabled and well supported by regular opportunities for all staff and governors to reflect upon what is working well or challenges that need addressing. As a result, the school is developing a strong culture of openness and mutual support.

Governors support the school well. They have a strong sense of belonging to the community they serve and work well to support the caring ethos of the school. Overall, they have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school through regular, detailed reports from the headteacher and by gathering a wide range of evidence from involvement in monitoring activities. They provide appropriate challenge to leaders, asking relevant and at times challenging questions regarding the school's provision.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the school's approach to safeguarding and ensure that there are suitable arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's financial position. They are aware of the challenges it faces regarding financial planning, and ensure that the school provides good value for money.

Leaders plan the use of resources strategically to support groups of pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals. Their spending decisions impact positively on the well-being and achievement of the most vulnerable pupils. For example, they make efficient use of the pupil development grant to help pupils narrow gaps in their learning, support families with financial help for trips and provide small group sessions that improve pupils' readiness to learn.

Overall, the school's relationship with families and the local community is a notable strength. Partnerships with parents and local organisations are mutually beneficial and contribute purposefully to improved outcomes for most pupils, especially for their well-being and self-esteem. Nearly all parents feel that the school is more than a place of learning for their children and strongly appreciate the support and guidance the school provides. As a result of these positive aspects, there is effective co-operation of leadership at all levels, which contributes significantly to the school's welcoming and inclusive ethos.

## 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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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