



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

**A report on**

**St Mary's R.C. Primary School**

**Wyndham Crescent  
Canton  
CF11 9EF**

**Date of inspection: November 2023**

**by**

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

## About St Mary's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Mary's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	235
Pupils of statutory school age	185
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%)	31.1%
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%)	8.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	43.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	21/09/2015
Start date of inspection	20/11/2023

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 Mary's R.C. Primary School is a warm, caring and welcoming school. Its vision of 'Love, Grow, Believe, Achieve' permeates all it does. Pupils are secure and their relationships with staff are strong. As a result, pupils behave very well and are quick to settle and engage in their work.

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with English as an additional language (EAL) or with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in their learning. Teachers' development of the basic skills of all pupils is a strength of the school. In addition, learning support staff aid pupils in accessing learning extremely well. However, the independent learning skills, particularly of more able pupils, are less well developed.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a suitable range of learning experiences. Teachers' plan purposeful opportunities to develop pupils' oracy, reading, writing and mathematics skills well. Provision to support pupils to make progress in their numeracy and digital skills is less developed. Teachers and support staff provide high quality feedback to pupils about the strengths and areas for development within their learning. As a result, most pupils make strong progress in their learning, knowing the steps required to improve their work. However, staff do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning.

The school is well led by the headteacher, with able support from the deputy headteacher and senior staff. The team work purposefully to ensure teachers' expectations for their pupils are appropriate, including for more vulnerable groups of learners. Leaders ensure that the school sits at the heart of the community it serves. Parents feel valued and part of the life of the school and parish, benefiting from the successful partnerships fostered between the home and school. Nearly all pupils are happy and proud to attend the school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching challenges all pupils, including the more able, to develop their independent learning skills
- R2 Improve provision for pupils to develop and apply their numeracy and digital skills
- R3 Provide opportunities for pupils to make choices in their learning to develop a more engaging curriculum

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Most pupils in St Mary's R.C. Primary School make strong progress in their learning. Many pupils enter the school with the knowledge, skills and understanding that are around or below those expected for their age and stage of development. However, as they move through the school, most pupils make good progress from their starting point, including those with EAL, ALN and those eligible for free school meals.

Most pupils' communication skills are strong. Most pupils listen appropriately and follow instructions well, as part of classroom routines, and respond appropriately to questioning from adults, recalling information and facts well. Minority of pupils acquire the English language quickly and over time, and many speak confidently as they interact successfully with adults and each other. As pupils move through the school, most pupils make good progress with their oracy skills and can use a comprehensive range of vocabulary, for example when talking about diversity. By Year 6, most pupils are articulate and can express themselves confidently and in detail when sharing their views about school and their work.

Across the school, most pupils' Welsh language skills are satisfactory. Younger pupils show their understanding of the Welsh language by responding appropriately to simple commands and joining in with Welsh songs. They develop a range of simple vocabulary, relevant to their learning, including numbers and feelings. Most older pupils build on their skills confidently. Most pupils pronunciation skills are good.

Throughout the school, pupils develop their reading skills well. They are enthusiastic about books and can talk about their favourite authors and the genre of writing they prefer to read. Younger pupils quickly develop a good understanding of letter sounds and use different methods to develop their early reading skills. By Year 2, most pupils are reading simple texts fluently and starting to develop expression. Most Year 4 pupils read more challenging texts with fluency and make sensible predictions and self-correct to show strong comprehension skills. Older pupils read more complex texts with good understanding, for example when researching what constitutes a healthy meal and using appropriate, scientific vocabulary.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. Most younger pupils begin to record their ideas through mark making, forming legible letters, and writing simple words. By Year 3, many pupils write in different forms, choosing appropriate vocabulary and using full stops and capital letters accurately. Most pupils write well across the curriculum. For example, older pupils use appropriate scientific language, organise their work into paragraphs and use appropriate connectives whilst writing a science investigation about the length of wire affecting the brightness of a bulb. In addition, most pupils' handwriting and presentation is good and their correct use of punctuation is consistent.

Most pupils make strong progress in mathematics. For example, younger pupils measure the volume of liquids in different containers accurately. By Years 3 and 4, many pupils know and recall times tables facts and most have a sound understanding of place value. Most pupils understand the properties of shape and

concepts such as symmetry well. Many pupils develop their estimate skills appropriately, for example the weight of everyday objects. However, more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons and as a result, do not engage fully in their learning. The majority of pupils apply their numeracy skills purposefully in other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils analyse data from census information diligently when researching into the number of Welsh speakers across Wales. However, a minority of pupils do not apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum to a high enough standard.

Younger pupils use digital tablets to support their learning across the curriculum, for example with phonic work or drawing a castle. By Year 6, most pupils use a range of digital programs to present a range of work across the curriculum. For example, pupils use an appropriate app to record a series of questions for a grandfather of one pupil in the class who fought in World War 2. However, many pupils do not have a strong enough understanding of the full range of skills such as databases, spreadsheets and coding.

Most pupils develop their physical skills effectively. The youngest pupils develop their gross motor skills appropriately. For example, most show good balancing skills when using the equipment on the yard. In addition, they demonstrate appropriate fine motor skills, for example when using paint to print initial sounds, using scissors to cut out shapes and using plasticene to create letters. Older pupils in Year 5 show good batting and bowling skills when playing cricket. Many pupils participate in tournaments and after school clubs, further enhancing their physical skills.

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

Nearly all pupils feel proud of their school and are warm and welcoming to visitors. For example, pupils hold doors open for visitors and show courtesy when walking in corridors, considering the needs of others. In addition, they are eager to discuss their work and learning experiences. Most pupils feel safe and cared for and know who to turn to if they need help or support.

Nearly all pupils benefit from the daily, valuable opportunities to reflect upon and talk about their feelings through engaging in meditation sessions. As a result, most pupils are quickly ready to learn and have a strong sense of well-being.

Nearly all pupils respect the rights of others and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. As a result, most pupils behave well in class and around the school. They learn and play well together and encourage and support each other with compassion and kindness, reflecting the Christian values that the school actively promotes.

Nearly all pupils from Years 3 to 6, including those from different groups, are invited to be members of the school Senedd. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and show a strong commitment to improving the school and working with their community. For example, pupils have organised a collection for a charity for the older members of society and are keen to combat loneliness during the festive season. However, the work of these groups is too often overly directed by adults.

Most pupils quickly engage in tasks and sustain concentration well. Younger pupils confidently explore all aspects of their environment and show appropriate levels of

independence. However, as pupils move through the school, their independent learning skills are less well developed. This is often because they have too few opportunities to make choices and lead their own learning.

The school actively promotes the development of key learning skills and attitudes in thoughtful displays which feature these 'can do' principles. For example, pupils benefit from the 'learning pits' to encourage them to face challenges, 'keep trying and never give up'. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. They use success criteria purposefully to identify and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Most pupils understand and value the feedback provided by their teachers and their peers and respond to it effectively to improve their learning.

Most pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves fit and healthy by making good food and drink choices. Older pupils know the importance of being active and are passionate about sport. Many pupils work in teams and solve problems successfully, for example when building zip wires during forest school sessions at a local park.

Many pupils of all ages attend a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as karate, gardening and dance club. These allow pupils to develop a range of physical, artistic, creative and social skills and support their well-being effectively.

Most pupils develop as responsible citizens successfully. For example, most pupils know how to stay safe online and can explain about not sharing passwords and the dangers of cyberbullying. In addition, younger pupils learn to value and look after the environment, such as when they grow and then cook fruit and vegetables and older pupils have a beneficial understanding of the impact of their actions on the environment.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff develop very effective working relationships with pupils, which creates a positive, inclusive, 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, planned through half termly topics, that align effectively to the vision and principles of the Curriculum for Wales and the school's Christian ethos. In general, teachers provide lessons that engage pupils' interests appropriately and motivate them to succeed and to support them to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, teachers do not always ensure that learning experiences stimulate pupils enough, particularly for the most able and pupils. In addition, they do not provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to influence their own learning.

Teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that most 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. Teachers plan exceptionally well for pupils with EAL, ensuring that they quickly build a knowledge and skills of English enabling them to engage fully in all aspects of the curriculum. 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, Year 5 pupils as part of their science work, write up an investigation about which shapes will have the most resistance to water.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and digital skills through a range of tasks is less well developed. Most pupils are confident using technology to enhance their learning with presentations, research, and word processing. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop the full range of skills such as data bases, spreadsheets, and coding. In addition, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum in a range of contexts is underdeveloped.

Teachers successfully deploy skilled support staff to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. They work closely with teachers and contribute effectively to pupils' learning experiences. As a result, most pupils make good progress. However, pupils identified as being more able often lack suitable challenge to develop deeper thinking and independent skills.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills across the school is appropriate. Staff are good role models and pupils use Welsh voluntarily and enthusiastically around school, both 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 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 visit local places of interest linked to their topics, such as Cardiff Castle, Barry Island and Rhondda Heritage Park. Teachers use Welsh artists as a stimulus for pupils own work, such as Jack Skivins and Rhiannon Roberts.

Teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies is a strength. For example, they provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to peer and self-assess their work. In addition, staff give pupils have high quality feedback. As a result, most pupils are confident in improving their work.

Leaders and teachers make effective use of assessment processes to track pupil progress. There are regular, collaborative pupil progress meetings, which help to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the progress each pupil is making and agree the next steps for learning.

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

The school is a happy and diverse community, which successfully embodies the school's ethos and values of welcome, love and respect. The level of care, support and guidance provided for pupils and their families is highly effective. The headteacher and staff firmly believe in the school being a community where everyone is valued. This is recognised by parents who feel listened to and speak warmly of the relationships they have with the school. In addition, the school supports pupils well in

developing a sense of belonging through a worthwhile understanding of their locality and heritage.

Provision for supporting pupils with ALN is effective. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) provides valuable support to pupils, parents and staff. For example, she meets and greets families each morning to strengthen relationships and proactively deals with any family's concerns. The senior leadership team, including the ALNCo, conduct regular learning review meetings with staff to ensure the needs of pupils are clearly identified, supported and monitored successfully. Staff track pupil progress in relation to the targets on their individual plans effectively and successfully evaluate the impact of support programmes. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

All staff provide a broad and relevant range of strategies to support pupils' well-being effectively. These include daily well-being check-ins and safe spaces in every classroom. In addition, learning support staff know and understand the needs of pupils' they support very well, and are highly effective.

The school successfully works with a wide range of agencies and benefits from worthwhile relationships within their cluster of schools. Strong partnerships ensure effective care and support for pupils when moving on to the next stage of their education. For example, staff from the primary cluster schools provide additional forest school and nurture sessions during the summer term to ensure a smooth transition. Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to develop pupils' spiritual and moral purpose in assemblies and in Christian meditation time at the beginning of each afternoon session. These experiences afford beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect upon and discuss their beliefs. As a result, nearly all pupils show respect and empathy for the views of others.

The school places a strong emphasis on providing a rich and varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and help pupils to learn more about their local area and the heritage and culture of Wales, for example, The National Museum of Wales and a boat trip on the river Taff. Staff provide opportunities for a residential trip further afield that provides pupils with new experiences and successfully builds their confidence, resilience and team working skills.

Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to develop purposeful links with their local community, which pupils engage with well. For example, the involvement of a local resident to explore future developments for Cardiff Bay during the Year 4 Coasts Projects provided the opportunity for pupils to develop their understanding of the world of work and foster ambitions for the future.

The school provides valuable opportunities to develop pupils' ethical skills through supporting local and international charities. For example, pupils raise money to establish water supplies in rural areas of Nigeria and pupils' involvement in 'The Big Lent Walk' provide effective opportunities to develop empathy and reflect on the needs of others.

The school promotes a culture of safety, care and support for all families successfully. There is an established and clear system for any safeguarding concerns to be reported and remedial action is quickly taken when needed, for



example in reporting to external agencies. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, with appropriate arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has worked alongside all stakeholders of the school to establish a clear vision for the school. The vision is based around the school's Christian ethos which leaders and staff use to set the tone for the life and work of the school. With the support of the senior leadership team, the headteacher facilitates a purposeful focus on building successful relationships with parents, the local parish and the wider community. Leaders have promoted a strong safeguarding culture in the school. As a result, staff know safeguarding procedures very well and work effectively to provide pupils with appropriate care.

Leaders set clear expectations for teaching and learning, ensuring that most groups of learners achieve in line with their age and stage of development. Leaders provide appropriate challenge to staff, including when needed addressing areas of underperformance. In addition, leaders provide clear, helpful feedback to staff with expectations for improvement within specific areas. Performance management targets for all staff link well with the school's development plans.

Leaders work to ensure that the school is at the heart of the community. Regular visitors from the parish volunteer in the school teaching the pupils skills, such as sewing. In addition, one of the pupil voice groups, the 'Mini Vinnies' identify ways in which the school can best help projects in the community, such as collecting food to be donated to the local food bank.

Leaders monitor and allocate resources well. For example, the school uses grants, such as the pupil development grant effectively to support pupils affected by poverty. As a result, most pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make strong progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders have a clear timetable for range a suitable range of monitoring activities, involving governors and staff. The senior leadership team run useful pupil progress meetings, which help staff identify where improvements are needed for individuals or groups of pupils in their own classes. In addition, these meetings provide leaders with a clear overview of whole school areas that need improvement. However, monitoring activities do not always lead to improvement plans to develop a broad range of skills, for example pupils' numeracy and digital skills.

Leaders strategically plan a range of useful professional learning activities that meet the needs of individual staff as well as the school's needs. For example, staff work in small action research groups to consider aspects of effective practice. The groups all present valuable summaries to their colleagues to help improve teaching across the school. Groups have researched aspects of health and well-being, diversity and oracy skills, for example. As a result, of their research has improved its provision for developing pupils' oracy skills.

Governors support the school well. A few governors use their regular visits to the school to gain a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for

development. Governors make appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking and support leaders to manage finances effectively in line with the school's priorities. In general, governors know the national priorities and provide appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher.

The school's communication to support and enhance engagement with parents is extremely effective. For example, parents are invited, prior to parent teacher meetings, to meet with their own children to discuss their work. In addition, the school has welcomed parents from different cultures and backgrounds into the school to share their faiths and cultures. These events both enrich the learning experiences for pupils and contribute to parents feeling exceptionally well valued and part of the school community.

## 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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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