

**A report on**

**St Mellons C.I.W. Primary School**

**Dunster Road  
Llanrumney  
St Mellons C.I.W. Primary School  
Bridge Road  
Old St Mellons  
Cardiff  
CF3 6UY**

**Date of inspection: February 2025**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About St Mellons C.I.W. Primary School

Name of provider	St Mellons C.I.W. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	158
Pupils of statutory school age	109
Number in nursery classes	26
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 22.9%)	18.9%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 11.1%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/10/2016
Start date of inspection	03/02/2025

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.

## Summary

Over the past year, the school has experienced significant changes, including moving to a new building, a rapid increase in pupil numbers, and changes in leadership. In September 2024, an interim executive headteacher was seconded to the school. The new leadership arrangements have had a positive impact, but their long-term stability is uncertain. Leaders have created a clear vision for improvement and introduced worthwhile systems to monitor and evaluate progress. They are working closely with staff, governors, and the local authority to drive positive change and have established worthwhile professional learning partnerships with the executive headteacher's existing schools.

Many pupils start school with skills appropriate for their age. While they develop speaking and listening skills well, many pupils' progress in reading, writing and Welsh is limited. Many younger pupils are not yet sufficiently confident in applying new phonic skills to supporting their reading and writing. Only the oldest pupils use reading effectively for learning. Welsh language development slows as pupils move through the school, and many older pupils struggle to retain simple words and phrases in Welsh.

Leaders and staff have created a calm and positive learning environment, and most pupils behave well, but too often teaching does not challenge pupils sufficiently. Whilst teachers support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) well overall, they do not consistently provide enough challenge to help all pupils progress effectively.

The school has updated its curriculum to ensure pupil progress in all areas of learning and experience. Teachers support pupils' moral development effectively. However, overall, it is too early to measure the impact of the revised curriculum on the progress that pupils make with their skills, knowledge and understanding over time.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. They monitor attendance closely, with new strategies starting to improve attendance rates, although a minority of vulnerable pupils still have low attendance. Extra-curricular activities are limited, but new pupil voice groups now involve children in more opportunities to make decisions about their school.

While many governors support the school well, a minority need a clearer understanding of their roles in order to ensure they provide the most effective support and challenge for the school.

## Recommendations

We have made four recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Secure long term leadership arrangements and improve leadership capacity at all levels including that of the governing body
- R2. Improve the quality of teaching
- R3. Improve pupils' skills in Welsh, reading and writing
- R4. Improve rates of attendance for those pupils at risk of the impact of poverty

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

## Main evaluation

The school has undergone a period of significant change during the past academic year. This change includes a move to a new school building and site, a rapid and significant growth in pupil numbers and instability in the capacity of leadership.

In September 2024, the local authority worked with governors to put in place interim leadership arrangements, seconding an interim executive headteacher from a local Church in Wales federation for three days per week. These leaders have implemented clear plans for improvement, which are beginning to have a positive impact. However, the current leadership arrangements are temporary and there is no strategic plan to consolidate these or to put alternatives in place. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement remains uncertain.

In a short period of time, the new leadership team has established a strong vision for school improvement. Leaders have put in place worthwhile systems of monitoring and evaluation involving all staff and other partners, including governors and the local authority. They are establishing suitable professional learning partnerships with the executive headteacher's federation of schools that are starting to have a purposeful impact on improving provision and developing leadership.

Leaders ensure that improvement areas focus appropriately on national and local priorities. However, whole-school actions for improvement are at a very early stage and the impact on both pupil outcomes and provision, including teaching, is limited. Leaders, through carefully implemented performance management systems, have now defined clear roles and responsibilities for all staff. They have aligned these more closely to staff expertise and ensure that all staff have appropriate targets for improvement.

Many pupils enter school with social and communication skills around the level expected for their age. Over time, they develop their speaking and listening skills well. This includes those who have English as an additional language and those affected adversely by poverty. Almost all pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points. Overall, however, many pupils make insufficient progress with the development of their reading, writing and Welsh language skills. In addition, they do not apply their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum or develop their digital skills consistently.

Most of the youngest pupils enjoy mark making in purposeful contexts as part of their play. The oldest pupils make good progress with their writing skills as part of their work across the curriculum. Despite these strengths, overall, the development of pupils' writing skills is inconsistent. Many pupils do not develop a sound understanding of the features of different forms of writing or make good enough progress in their ability to spell and use grammar and punctuation accurately.

As they move through the school, a majority of pupils are beginning to make satisfactory progress in reading, and many of the oldest pupils use reading as an effective tool for learning across the breadth of the curriculum. Leaders have recently introduced a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics, but this has not yet had time to impact positively on younger pupils' basic reading and writing skills. A minority of pupils do not convey a love of reading and cannot talk about familiar stories or books they have enjoyed.

Many of the youngest pupils make a sound start to learning Welsh, exchanging simple greetings. Despite this positive start, as they move through the school progress for most pupils slows. Nearly all of the oldest pupils retain only a few simple sentences in the present tense and lack confidence in speaking Welsh overall.

Leaders have introduced more consistent approaches and expectations to managing pupils' behaviour. This helps to ensure that most pupils behave well and supports a calm learning environment.

Teachers provide sufficient support to meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs and those adversely affected by the impact of poverty. However, overall, teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge to pupils to move their learning forward, take into account their prior learning or ensure that activities have a clear purpose.

Teachers and other staff provide the youngest pupils with worthwhile opportunities for them to work independently and collaboratively. However, as pupils progress through the school, the learning environment does not appropriately reflect pupils' interests and stage of development and does not adequately promote pupils' independent learning skills. Staff's use of questioning and feedback to support pupils' progress is at an early stage of development.

Leaders and staff have recently introduced a revised curriculum that contains a suitable breadth of learning across all areas of Curriculum for Wales. It takes account of Welsh heritage and culture successfully, reflecting both current circumstances in Wales, such as the working of the Senedd, and important aspects of Welsh history that shape our heritage, such as the industrial revolution. The curriculum promotes the development of pupils' moral development well through the use of a 'Big Question' for each class. Whilst the curriculum is developing suitably, in too many cases teachers fail to engage and motivate pupils well enough and this impacts negatively on the progress that they make.

Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture across the school. All staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being effectively. There is suitable provision in place to support pupils to keep themselves safe when working online.

Leaders monitor attendance closely and work effectively with external agencies to improve the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent. They use new strategies and grant funding well to ensure good rates of attendance. These actions are beginning to have a positive impact in general, but the attendance of vulnerable pupils remains too low.

Leaders have recently developed new arrangements to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). These robust processes, alongside effective partnership working with external agencies and careful monitoring of their impact are beginning to ensure that pupils with ALN make good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. The school has recently established a range of pupil voice groups. However, the work of these groups is at an early stage and it is too soon to see their impact and influence. After-school extra-curricular provision for pupils is limited.

The headteacher works effectively alongside the governing body and in consultation with the local authority to review and evaluate school finances and resources, including working hard to reduce considerably the proposed budget deficit. Many governors are knowledgeable about the school and the challenges of its current and previous context. They are generally supportive. However, there are a minority of governors who do not always work closely enough with the headteacher as a critical friend and do not understand their roles and responsibilities clearly enough.

### **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.



## **Evidence base of the report**

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

## 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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