

A report on
St Paul's Voluntary Aided Primary School

**Bowling Bank
Isycoed
Wrexham
Wrexham
LL13 9RL**

Date of inspection: February 2025

by

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

About St Paul's Voluntary Aided Primary School

Name of provider	St Paul's Voluntary Aided Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	St Paul's VA Primary School is a Church in Wales voluntary aided faith school under the diocese of St Asaph
Number of pupils on roll	35
Pupils of statutory school age	34
Number in nursery classes	*
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%)	20.2%
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	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2022

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/11/2017
Start date of inspection	10/02/2025

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

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

Summary

The headteacher fosters a cohesive and inclusive learning environment, ensuring that all pupils feel valued. Through her calm and reflective leadership, she promotes equity and unity across the federation of schools. She supports leadership development by encouraging collaboration among senior leaders and staff, leading to a shared approach in teaching and assessment. Teachers engage in reflective self-evaluation, although staff involvement in monitoring remains an area for growth.

Pupils develop strong communication skills, expressing themselves confidently in discussions and listening attentively. The youngest pupils develop excellent phonics awareness, while older pupils read fluently and critically engage with texts. Teachers integrate many opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum, with younger pupils developing foundational skills through play and older pupils using persuasive language effectively.

Teachers' planning embeds mathematics into real-world contexts. Entrepreneurial activities teach pupils budgeting and decision-making. Digital literacy is a strength, with pupils working together effectively to develop strong skills. All pupils understand online safety. Rich learning experiences extend beyond the classroom through outdoor activities, creative arts, and cultural events.

The school has placed an emphasis on pupils' Welsh language development with staff modelling its use and older pupils mentoring younger ones. Staff prioritise pupil well-being, fostering resilience, confidence, and positive relationships. Older pupils take on leadership roles, actively shaping their learning through research, presentations, and peer discussions.

Support for pupils with additional learning needs is well-structured and incorporates effective working with external agencies. Strong partnerships with parents ensure that families feel supported and involved. Governors play an active role, although their direct engagement in school monitoring is still evolving.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Include all stakeholder in the monitoring and self-evaluation process
- R2. Reduce the use of printed templates in order to ensure a suitable level of challenge in extended writing across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher works diligently to create a cohesive and inclusive learning environment, ensuring that all members of the school community feel valued. She is calm and reflective and communicates vision for the school that focuses effectively on ensuring equity for all pupils. She makes considered responses and has introduced effective strategies, which bring cohesion in many aspects of provision within the schools that form part of this federation. As a result, there is a growing sense of unity as staff develop in their confidence to share and learn from each other.

Leaders have high expectation of themselves, staff and pupils. The headteacher has put plans in place to improve leadership capacity across the federation of schools by providing worthwhile opportunities for senior leaders to meet and work together. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the work of the school and is knowledgeable about where improvements need to be made. She is beginning to develop a culture of reflective self-evaluation and improvement amongst staff based upon monitoring activities planned across the academic year. Teachers engage in professional learning opportunities, working together with others within the federation to refine teaching strategies and ensure consistency across the curriculum. As a result, they have a consistent approach to marking and a cohesive understanding of outcomes in numeracy. However, overall, staff involvement in the monitoring process is limited.

From an early age, pupils develop strong communication skills. During play and structured activities, they confidently express themselves in various contexts and engage in meaningful discussions. They listen attentively to both their peers and staff. Younger pupils develop a good understanding of letters and sounds through engaging activities, while older pupils develop their awareness of phonics well. More able readers demonstrate fluency and expression. They express an enjoyment in their books and discuss their favourite authors with confidence.

Teachers provide rich learning opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in areas across the curriculum. Younger pupils build early writing skills through play, progressing to writing structured stories and explanations. Older pupils demonstrate their ability to use persuasive language effectively, such as creating travel brochures for landmarks like Stonehenge and their local area. Most pupils confidently write at length using a range of genres. However, a few activities do not always provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils at different stages of development. At times, the overuse of printed templates tends to restrict opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in different contexts. Staff provide effective oral and written feedback, encouraging pupils to reflect on and improve their work.

Mathematics is woven throughout the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a strong understanding of key concepts. Teachers have high expectations, providing appropriate levels of challenge and engaging pupils in hands-on learning. Younger pupils explore numbers through play during activities such as measuring and digging for coins in the sand. While older pupils apply their numeracy skills to real-world contexts, such as using co-ordinates to locate volcanoes. Pupils benefit from entrepreneurial activities. They begin to develop a clear understanding of profit and budgeting while collaborating with staff to decide how to spend the funds raised.

Technology is an integral part of learning at the school. From an early age, pupils develop a variety of digital skills, which they later apply confidently to their work. Digital leaders play a key role in supporting their peers by teaching new programs and coding techniques. Pupils regularly collaborate on group presentations, effectively incorporating both text and images and, most importantly, all pupils have a strong awareness of online safety.

Leaders identify national priorities which require targeted support well. For example, recent focus on the work of the Criw Cymraeg has ensured that the school is making good progress towards promoting the Welsh language. Staff model the language effectively, whilst older pupils mentor younger ones to help build confidence in speaking Welsh in everyday situations.

The school place a high priority on nurturing each pupil's well-being. Together staff foster a culture of positivity, resilience, and mutual respect. They provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to influence their learning, from selecting class themes to deciding how they present their work. Through well-structured lessons, pupils develop their understanding of positive relationships, resilience, and confidence in expressing their emotions. Pupil voice is a positive feature of the school. Older pupils, have good opportunities to take on leadership roles and make valuable and authentic contributions to school life.

Spotlight: Pupils taking ownership of their own learning

Pupils apply their leadership roles to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning through collaboratively investigating and researching a range of topics. They plan their learning effectively, leading to pupils confidently delivering presentations and challenging their peers through effective questioning. As a result, nearly all older pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning.

Staff have developed robust systems that identify, monitor, and support pupils with additional learning needs well. They collaborate with external agencies successfully and use a range of strategies to support pupils' emotional well-being, social communication, literacy, and numeracy skills effectively. The positive impact of this provision is evident in the progress pupils make toward their personal targets.

The school has strong relationships with parents and the wider community. Regular communication keeps families informed about their children's learning and provides guidance on how they can support their education at home. Parents feel welcomed and well-supported, with staff always approachable and responsive to concerns. Visitors such as local farmers, authors, and artists enrich the curriculum, broadening pupils' understanding of the world beyond the classroom.

Governors play an active role in the school's development, staying well-informed about the school's priorities and supporting staff in their work. While their involvement in monitoring and evaluating school progress is still developing, their commitment to the school is strong.

Staff plan a wide range of enriching experiences for pupils. Outdoor learning areas offer opportunities for exploration and hands-on activities, such as engaging in vocabulary-rich storytelling experiences based on the book, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'. Pupils participate in a variety of activities, from creative arts to sporting events, helping them develop diverse skills and interests. The federation's 'Journey Days', which bring pupils together from different schools to celebrate religious and cultural festivals, further enrich their educational experience.

Attendance is closely monitored, and leaders work with families to ensure children attend school regularly. Transition arrangements support pupils as they move through different stages of their education, helping them to feel secure and confident in their learning journey.

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)

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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