

A report on

St Nicholas C.I.W. Primary

**St Nicholas
Cardiff
CF5 6SG**

Date of inspection: February 2026

by

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

About St Nicholas C.I.W. Primary

Name of provider	St Nicholas C.I.W. Primary
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan 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	152
Pupils of statutory school age	111
Number in nursery classes	21
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 21.7%)	18.2%
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 9.2%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/01/2017
Start date of inspection	09/02/2026

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

St Nicholas CiW Primary School is a warm, welcoming and inclusive community where pupils feel safe, valued and respected. Leaders provide strong strategic direction and set a clear vision that promotes high expectations for pupils and staff. The headteacher creates a family ethos that is evident throughout the school.

A strength of the school is its rich and engaging curriculum. Pupils benefit from a wide range of meaningful learning experiences that build their knowledge and skills progressively. Staff weave creativity throughout learning and support pupils to think imaginatively and work with increasing independence. Teachers regularly review and refine the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all learners.

Across the school, most pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning and make good progress. They show resilience, choosing challenging tasks and persevering when work becomes difficult. Staff generally provide effective feedback that helps pupils improve, but they do not always provide specific enough feedback to help them to improve their punctuation and grammar.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills well and older pupils use the language confidently in simple conversations. They also grow as capable mathematicians who apply their skills in real-life contexts. Pupils' development of their creative and digital skills is strong.

The school is successful in promoting an anti-racist culture. Staff ensure pupils learn about and celebrate diversity, challenge stereotypes, and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Staff know pupils well and provide strong support for those with additional learning needs. Relationships across the school are positive, contributing to pupils' exemplary behaviour. Overall attendance is good, but too many pupils are persistently absent.

Robust procedures for monitoring and evaluation ensure continuous improvement in pupil performance and teaching standards. Governors provide valuable support and challenge. They have a good knowledge of the school's work and contribute well to school life.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Provide effective feedback to ensure that all pupils develop a sound understanding of punctuation and grammar
- R2 Reduce persistent absenteeism

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Senior leaders provide strong, purposeful leadership with a clear strategic direction that drives school improvement. The headteacher places a high priority on providing a warm, inclusive culture where pupils feel safe, valued and respected. Creating a family ethos is central to her vision. Roles and responsibilities for leaders and staff are clearly defined and communicated, helping to ensure consistency and shared expectations across the school. Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils.

Spotlight: Effective curriculum development

The school's rich curriculum has a significant positive impact on pupils' learning. It provides them with valuable experiences that develop their knowledge, skills and understanding progressively. A particular strength is how staff weave creativity throughout learning and support pupils to think imaginatively and work with increasing independence. Staff are highly reflective and keep the school's curriculum under constant review to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils.

The rich curriculum and effective teaching promote positive attitudes to learning among most pupils. They view finding work difficult as an opportunity to learn and will often choose tasks that they know will stretch them. In general, staff provide effective feedback that enables pupils to improve, and many pupils persevere or look for new solutions when they face difficulties.

There are rigorous systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Staff use these well to identify all pupils' individual needs. This creates an inclusive ethos and offers a range of effective provision to ensure that most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their oracy skills. They listen to the contributions of others carefully and respond thoughtfully, using vocabulary appropriate to the context. Throughout the school, staff use oracy effectively as a tool for learning and to support pupils to work collaboratively and to think critically. Many younger pupils are enthusiastic readers who make good progress. They retell stories with increasing accuracy and demonstrate developing comprehension. A few younger pupils' progress slows because they rely too heavily on sounding words out rather than recognising familiar words automatically. As they move through the school, many pupils continue to strengthen their reading skills and apply them confidently and effectively across the curriculum.

Many younger pupils are beginning to write effectively in meaningful contexts. Most older pupils write imaginatively with good expression. In general, many pupils spell commonly

used words appropriately, but do not consistently use punctuation and grammar accurately. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently focused feedback to help pupils to improve in these areas, although this is an aspect that the school is currently working to address. Spelling, grammar and punctuation improve for the oldest pupils who are creative in the way that they write, using their imagination to good effect.

Most younger pupils make good progress in learning Welsh. Older pupils build on this positive start well, answering simple questions and extending their responses. They display a love of the language and participate enthusiastically when given opportunities to express themselves in Welsh. Teachers model the language well and integrate the use of Welsh effectively into the daily life of the school.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of key mathematical concepts and make good progress. Teachers provide worthwhile, practical activities that embed understanding well. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils are confident, competent mathematicians who use their well-developed skills in a broad range of authentic contexts.

Most pupils use a wide range of digital skills confidently and effectively to support their learning. As they progress through the school, teachers provide valuable opportunities for them to choose, use and apply their well-developed skills in meaningful contexts. Digital leaders hold regular assemblies to share effective strategies for staying safe online.

Spotlight: Promoting an anti-racist culture

The school is particularly effective in creating a culture that is strongly anti-racist. Leaders have carried out valuable and effective research, helping them to develop and promote a culture that has moved beyond being non-racist to actively being anti-racist. Worthwhile professional learning has helped staff to become better informed. Consequently, they tailor the curriculum to ensure that they challenge racial stereotypes, and pupils learn about positive role models from the global majority. Staff encourage pupils to express their cultural heritage and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging.

There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual understanding of themselves and the world around them. Teachers create meaningful contexts that encourage pupils to reflect on their beliefs and deepen their sense of identity.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture that promotes the safety and well-being of pupils effectively. Staff have positive working relationships with pupils. These strong relationships contribute to the exemplary behaviour exhibited by most pupils. Provision for pupils with social and emotional needs is strong and helps pupils to develop useful strategies to regulate their emotions.

Support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength. There is swift identification of pupils with ALN. Teaching, based on a secure understanding of pupils'

needs, is adapted well to enable pupils with ALN to thrive. Support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers collaborate well with support staff to ensure that learning intentions are clear. Leaders facilitate regular contact with parents and provide good opportunities for families to better understand and support their child's learning and progress.

Leaders actively promote good attendance through clear communication about its importance. Overall, attendance is strong, though too many pupils are persistently absent from school and this remains a priority for improvement.

Pupil groups have an active role in the school. The school's Senedd has a prominent voice, and its members effectively monitor the work of other committees to ensure that their actions have a positive impact on school life.

A robust monitoring and evaluation cycle enables leaders to improve standards of teaching and learning, identify strengths and areas for development and track pupil progress accurately. Leaders take good account of national priorities when planning for improvement.

Provision for professional learning is well planned, high-quality and prioritised in line with the school's current priorities. This contributes to a whole-school culture of continuous improvement and shared ownership. There are effective processes to review the performance of all staff. Teaching staff evaluate their own performance and identify areas for professional growth. An effective coaching model and professional discussions ensure leaders provide relevant support for staff to meet their personal and school targets.

Governors offer valuable, well-informed support and provide appropriate challenge, drawing on first-hand evidence to hold leaders to account. Leaders and governors manage finances effectively, making thoughtful, pupil-centred decisions. They use grant funding well to ensure equity and targeted support for eligible pupils and those with additional needs.

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/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

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.

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Publication date: 15/04/2026