



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

A report on

**St Pauls Voluntary Aided Primary School
Bowling Bank
Isycoed
Wrexham
LL13 9RL**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About St Pauls Voluntary Aided Primary School

St. Paul's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Wrexham. The school serves a rural area close to the English border. Since April 2016, the school and Borderbrook Anglican Voluntary Controlled School have formed the Maelor Church Schools Federation. Both schools share the same headteacher and governing body. St Paul's Primary School was last inspected in November 2009. This is the first inspection of the school since the federation.

There are 50 pupils on roll, including a few part-time nursery pupils. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. One class caters for foundation phase aged pupils and the other for pupils in key stage 2.

Around 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below the Wales average of 19%. The school has identified around 30% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is higher than the Wales average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are white British. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher, who is the existing headteacher of Borderbrook Anglican Voluntary Controlled School, was appointed as headteacher of St. Paul's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary and the head of the federation in January 2016.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The school is a nurturing environment that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem effectively. The way the school plans and delivers its personal and social curriculum is a strength, allowing pupils to explore their feelings and to discuss social and moral issues well. Most pupils make good progress and achieve the expected outcomes and levels by the end of the foundation phase and key stage 2. However, the level of challenge pupils receive is not always successful in ensuring that they reach their full potential, particularly the more able pupils. The school is successful in delivering many parts of its planned curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the planning and provision to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. The headteacher has worked effectively and diligently to bring the staff and governors from both schools in the federation together as a united group. This supports a developing culture of teamwork successfully. Both schools in the federation share very similar strengths and areas for development.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the provision for mathematics and numeracy
- R2 Ensure that teaching challenges pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- R3 Improve feedback to pupils, so that they know how to improve their work consistently
- R4 Ensure that monitoring activities focus more sharply on pupils' standards and the quality of teaching

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils enter school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age. While at school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress.

Across the school, nearly all pupils listen attentively to their teachers. In pairs and small groups, they listen carefully to one another, sharing ideas and taking good account of the opinions of others. In the foundation phase, most pupils show good understanding of what they have heard and ask relevant questions to find out specific information. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils contribute to group discussions maturely. They listen to others politely, ask appropriate questions and respond to both the content and the speakers' viewpoints sensibly, for example when making models for a comic strip.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in learning to read. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively to sound-out unfamiliar words and correct themselves when they make an error. Nearly all talk enthusiastically about their favourite books. In key stage 2, most pupils read aloud clearly and with appropriate expression. They give concise summaries of the book's plot and make sensible predictions about how the story might end. Most are beginning to use inference and deduction effectively to improve their reading skills. For example, they collect clues or hints that they think may be important later in the story.

By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils write neatly and form letters correctly, paying good attention to their size and spacing. Many are careful to include full stops and capital letters in their sentences. Many pupils spell common words correctly and make sensible attempts at more difficult words. Across the curriculum, they write in a number of different styles. For example, they write a balanced argument after listening to the story of The Good Samaritan, and use interesting adjectives when writing acrostic poems about animals.

In key stage 2, most pupils write legibly using a cursive script and present their work acceptably. They choose their words carefully when writing and include appropriate use of similes and metaphors to add colour to their writing. However, by the end of key stage 2, the accuracy of a minority of pupils' spelling and punctuation is generally below expectations. Most pupils apply their literacy skills across the curriculum well. Overall, most write well for an appropriate range of purposes, adapting their style competently to suit their intended audience. Many write at length frequently and show a secure awareness of how to structure their writing, for example when using the appropriate language and structure to write a letter asking for donations for their Christmas raffle.

Overall, many pupils make sound progress in developing their Welsh skills. In the foundation phase, many use familiar phrases competently and respond to instructions from teachers and staff appropriately. Generally, pupils read simple Welsh texts with appropriate fluency, but they often struggle to understand what they have read. Overall, by the end of key stage 2, pupils use familiar Welsh vocabulary suitably for a basic range of sentence patterns that they practise regularly.

In the foundation phase, many pupils use their measuring skills well, such as to measure the length of shoes and other objects around the school. Across the school, pupils generally develop a sound understanding of number, shape and measures. Many pupils make the expected progress in acquiring mathematical skills and achieve the expected levels by the end of key stage 2. The majority have suitable recall of times tables and number facts and can collect and present data accurately. In key stage 2, a minority of pupils solve problems that involve more than one operation. Across the school, when given the opportunity, a majority of pupils use their numeracy skills suitably in many areas of the curriculum. For example, they calculate how much water was absorbed by different sized celery sticks in their science investigations or when re-ordering facts about countries in their geography works about the rainforests. However, a minority of pupils lack confidence when applying their knowledge of mathematics to new situations and are not always secure in their understanding of mathematical concepts at the appropriate level.

In the foundation phase, most pupils use commercial word processing and picture creating software competently, for example to write a thank you letter for people who visited the school during the world of work week. Using the internet, they research a website to find facts about animals and what they eat. In key stage 2, most pupils develop their independent information communication and technology (ICT) skills well. Many use tablet devices appropriately, for example to make movies about rare animals in the rainforest. They take photos and insert these successfully into comic strip apps, adding text successfully. Many pupils can confidently use coding software to program the computer to create a clip of a firework and draw basic 2D shapes.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know that they can turn to staff to discuss any issues if they are unhappy or worried. The standard of behaviour of nearly all pupils in lessons and around the school is good. They are courteous and polite with other pupils and adults.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and healthy living. Most pupils in the foundation phase take advantage of the fruit and milk that is available during the morning break. Many pupils enjoy taking part in a range of sporting activities, particularly swimming lessons.

Most pupils show enthusiasm towards their work and persevere well with tasks. They listen well in lessons and respond positively to their teachers.

Initiatives, such as daily exercise routines, encourage nearly all pupils to be punctual at the beginning of the school day, and this initiative has improved pupils' attendance well.

Many pupils take an active part in school life. They are proud of their work and feel valued. The school council influences the work of the school well. Through questionnaires and discussions, councillors gauge the opinions of other pupils effectively. They make presentations about the work they do to the governing body. Members of the school council from both schools in the federation took part in early discussions about Wrexham local authority's reorganisation plans, which gave pupils from both schools a valuable opportunity develop their confidence by communicating

with a wider audience. The e-cadets organise internet safety days that help other pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe on-line. Pupils involved in 'Faith Friends' plan and lead 'Worship Wednesday' effectively and confidently.

Pupils organise activities and fundraising events to support worthy causes, for example raising money for a campaign to support victims of the Manchester terrorist attack and buying a water cleaning unit for an African village. As a result, they develop an understanding of their social responsibilities and become ethically informed and responsible citizens.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

In every classroom, there are positive working relationships, which nurture pupils and help them learn. Staff use effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour well and this helps them settle to their tasks quickly. Staff engage pupils effectively by providing learning experiences that capture pupils' interests and widen their knowledge and experiences. Teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to work cooperatively and collaboratively. They ask a suitable range of questions that encourage pupils to recall their previous learning. Most staff provide pupils with purposeful explanations that help them to develop their understanding of new concepts and ideas. Most teachers prepare learning activities to meet the wide needs of pupils within the class. However, the level of challenge is not always successful in ensuring that pupils reach their potential, particularly the more able. Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Across the school, teachers and staff provide pupils with useful verbal feedback during lessons. Most teachers' written comments show pupils what they have done well and make suitable suggestions for improvement. However, a few of the feedback comments lack focus on showing pupils how to improve their writing skills, such as basic punctuation and spelling errors. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' marking and to think about the content of their work. There are a few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers, such as when reflecting on how well they have undertaken hot seating role play activities, but this is at an early stage of development.

Overall, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets requirements. The school's planning uses a thematic approach to help pupils to make appropriate links in their learning across the different areas of the curriculum. The school plans worthwhile opportunities for pupils to decide what and how they learn. In the foundation phase, teachers make effective use of outdoor learning spaces to encourage pupils to be physically active or to develop skills in using large tools safely. For example, 'Wellie Wednesdays' provide engaging opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, such as understanding mathematical language when comparing the length of sticks. In key stage 2, teachers plan an engaging curriculum based on topics such as the Second World War, the Tudors, Egyptians and rainforests. They provide valuable contexts for pupils to develop and apply their skills in real-life situations.

Teachers provide worthwhile and interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their higher-order reading skills when researching topics. Provision

to develop pupils' ICT skills is developing appropriately. There are examples where the provision and planning for developing pupils' numeracy skills is appropriate, such as when creating Venn diagrams to sort Tudor foods and using the lux unit of measurement to measure how much light penetrates through different materials in science. However, the provision and planning to develop pupils' mathematical understanding and numeracy skills across the curriculum are inconsistent. Overall, the lack of teaching time currently allocated to mathematics is a barrier to pupils making the best possible progress in the subject.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate. Most teachers and teaching assistants are suitable language role models. They incorporate everyday Welsh in classrooms and around the school successfully. There are sound opportunities for pupils to speak and write Welsh, for example in specific lessons and in 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions. Visits from Welsh artists and projects about Patagonia and traditional Welsh costumes develop pupils' understanding of Welsh culture successfully. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and about significant events around the world. For example, pupils learn about Christmas celebrations throughout Europe and reflect thoughtfully on how events in the news affect people's lives.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The way the school plans and delivers its personal and social curriculum is a strength. During these sessions, pupils have useful opportunities to explore their feelings and discuss moral issues. This curriculum helps pupils to learn about the importance of tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions. Pupils benefit from the federation's strong links with local clergy and places of worship. For example, members of the Christian community regularly conduct whole school worship that encourages pupils to reflect on their actions and attitudes and to consider moral issues.

Staff know pupils extremely well and provide a nurturing environment that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Across the federation, there are clear policies and procedures that staff apply consistently to ensure that all pupils receive strong levels of care, support and guidance. For example, the implementation of the federation's positive behaviour management policy leads to high levels of mutual respect and trust between pupils and staff.

Leaders analyse data and outcomes from standardised tests well to inform catch-up and support groups. This means that pupils in need of additional support receive timely interventions to improve, for example, their reading skills. Support staff benefit from appropriate professional development opportunities to help them deliver these programmes effectively. The school works purposefully with outside agencies and local authority teams to put in place strategies to support pupils identified as having additional learning needs. However, pupils' targets in individual education plans are often too broad and not specific enough to enable staff to measure progress easily.

The school has strong and supportive relationships with parents, who appreciate greatly the help their children receive. The school's parent-teacher association is instrumental in providing additional resources for pupils, for example to fund a music teacher to ensure that pupils receive whole class music tuition from a person with expertise in this area.

The school gives pupils many beneficial opportunities to develop their leadership skills. All key stage 2 pupils take on a leadership role, for example as playground buddies, e-cadets, super ambassadors or members of the school council. Pupils play an effective role in influencing the work of the federation, for example in developing the anti-bullying procedures. They are beginning to have a greater say in how and what they learn. For example, in 'super learning week', groups of pupils decide what learning activities they undertake and plan relevant activities for each area of learning. Older pupils take a lead role in planning 'Wednesday Worship' sessions, which they lead with assurance and skill.

Pupils benefit from many worthwhile experiences that broaden their knowledge and experience. As part of the world of work week, pupils learn about career opportunities from a wide range of visitors. For example, staff from Chirk Castle and an airline pilot talk to pupils about their jobs and the skills necessary to be effective in their roles. This helps to raise pupils' aspirations. Pupils have plentiful and worthwhile opportunities to explore outside of their local area. For example, all key stage 2 pupils in the federation attend an outdoor pursuits centre for three days where they explore the natural environment and take part in team building activities, such as gorge walking and rock climbing. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in the federation also visit Cardiff for three days to see the sights of the capital city and learn about Welsh history and culture by visiting St Fagans Museum of Welsh life and going underground at Big Pit in Blaenafon. Pupils also undertake many other worthwhile visits linked to the curriculum and areas of interest.

The school's provision to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking is good. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

Within a relatively short time, school leaders have established a suitable vision to support pupils' education and wellbeing across the federated schools. This ensures that the schools are calm and caring learning environments where nearly all pupils feel safe and supported. Leaders create a climate where pupils have a strong say in matters that affect them. As a result, pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example in their work as super ambassadors.

The headteacher has worked effectively to bring the staff and governors from both schools together as a united group. This supports a developing culture of teamwork successfully. There is a suitable staffing structure and staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities are developing appropriately. For example, there are sensible arrangements to delegate the leadership to senior staff in each school when the headteacher is off site. Staff with leadership roles have a positive impact on provision and pupils' standards. For example, leadership of literacy ensures that approaches to developing pupils' reading and writing skills are effective overall. Other leadership roles, such as the role of the additional learning needs co-ordinator, ensure that pupils receive additional support in a timely manner.

Senior leaders are beginning to use the federation arrangements successfully to improve pupils' experiences and wellbeing. For instance, they share expertise to

improve outdoor learning experiences such as forest school activities. The school uses shared staffing arrangements well to reduce aspects of teachers' workloads. For example, they share responsibilities for standardising and moderating pupils' work at cluster meetings. In addition, the schools are beginning to benefit from efficiency savings, for instance when arranging transport for school trips. St Paul's school is starting to provide leadership to introduce a few creative elements to the curriculum successfully. This is beginning to improve provision to develop pupils' ICT and literacy skills in combination, for example through film making projects and the use of programming.

Leaders analyse pupil performance data effectively to identify suitable improvement priorities. They undertake an appropriate range of additional monitoring activities including observations of lessons, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, when undertaking these activities, leaders make general evaluations of the types of provision on offer for pupils. They do not evaluate the impact of this work on the standards achieved or progress made by pupils well enough. This limits leaders' capacity to give teachers specific guidance to improve their teaching further.

Leaders show the capacity to implement improvement strategies successfully. For example, initiatives to develop pupils' higher-order reading skills are having a positive impact on standards. They have worked swiftly to address a declining trend in rates of pupils' attendance at St Paul's School by implementing successful strategies from Borderbrook. Effective performance management arrangements and a beneficial range of professional development opportunities for staff ensure that the schools makes progress towards their improvement targets. The school works well with, and learn from, other local schools, for example through the 'super learner' approach where key stage 2 pupils plan and timetable their own learning activities.

The headteacher and governors monitor the schools' budgets diligently. They allocate funding appropriately to support improvement, for example to purchase ICT resources. They make suitable use of the pupil development grant. They work innovatively with partners to secure improvements to resources. For example, work with partners such as the company responsible for building a new prison has improved outdoor learning and play facilities at St Paul's and a partnership with a national power company at Borderbrook has improved the outside learning environment.

Governors support the development of the federation well, for example by working with the schools to develop joint policies for important aspect of provision, such as child protection and safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of the schools' improvement priorities and monitor progress towards achieving these appropriately, for example by undertaking learning walks. Governors hold leaders to account appropriately, for example through regular meetings and performance management arrangements.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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Publication date: 25/01/2018