



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

A report on

**Usk CIW Primary School
Monmouth Road
Usk
NP15 1SE**

Date of inspection: April 2018

by

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

About Usk CIW Primary School

Usk Church in Wales Primary School is in the town of Usk in Monmouthshire local authority. There are 255 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in nine classes, five of which are mixed age.

On average over the past three years, around 5% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is well below the Wales average of 19%. The school states that around 13% of pupils are on the additional learning needs register, which is below the Wales average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special education needs. Nearly all pupils are white British. No pupils speak Welsh at home. A very few have English as an additional language.

The headteacher took up her post in November 2015, having previously been the acting headteacher for one year and the deputy headteacher for two years. Estyn last inspected the school in November 2010.

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

Pupils at Usk Church in Wales Primary School enjoy coming to school and make good progress in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills over time. Many pupils make particularly strong progress with their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The school is well resourced and benefits from extensive, well-designed outdoor areas that teachers use well to enhance pupils' learning and support the development of their literacy, numeracy and skills. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have created an imaginative curriculum that often engages pupils.

Senior leaders are effective. The headteacher and governing body have put in place good processes to identify the strengths of the school and the areas that need improvement. They know the school well and plan efficiently to improve provision and raise standards when needed. As a result, the school is developing a strong track record of improvement.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Provide pupils with opportunities to develop their independent learning skills and resilience to ensure that they remain focused on their learning
- R2 Improve spelling in key stage 2
- R3 Raise standards in handwriting and presentation in key stage 2

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to its preparation for the implementation of the Digital Competency Framework, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are relatively strong for their age and ability. Nearly all develop good literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school. They make particularly good progress with their ICT skills. Most pupils with additional learning needs progress well from their starting points.

Most pupils develop effective oracy skills that they use to support their studies across the curriculum. As they progress through the school, they speak with increasing clarity and confidence. For example, Year 4 pupils talk articulately about their work and what they like most about school. Pupils in the reception class enjoy listening to the story of Elmer and contribute enthusiastically to help complete parts of the story. However, occasionally, pupils do not always listen well enough to adults during whole class teaching. Most pupils develop effective Welsh oracy skills and use these well in class. For example, Year 2 pupils ask and answer questions confidently about how they feel, where they live and what they like doing. By Year 6, most are beginning to extend sentences well, such as providing reasons why they enjoyed a recent camping trip.

Nearly all pupils develop good reading skills. Many foundation phase pupils have a robust knowledge of letter sounds and an understanding of how punctuation helps them to read with fluency and expression. For example, pupils in Year 2 read, understand and respond well to written instructions about how to measure the relative size of constellations represented on a worksheet. Most key stage 2 pupils build well upon these skills. In Year 3, they read appropriate texts fluently and accurately. They infer meaning from texts and talk enthusiastically about favourite books and authors. In Year 6, most pupils predict what may happen in a story and justify their thinking with well-reasoned explanations. They use index and contents pages to access facts from information texts quickly. Most pupils develop suitable reading skills in Welsh, reading simple texts with good understanding.

Most pupils learn to write well and apply their skills imaginatively across the curriculum. In the foundation phase, most spell simple words accurately and develop neat, joined handwriting. They understand the features of a wide variety of genres and use them thoughtfully in their own work. For example, Year 2 pupils write logical instructions for making elf food. They understand the meaning of imperative verbs and include examples such as 'sprinkle, shake and stir' in their work. Many key stage 2 pupils use a mature vocabulary in their writing to engage the interest of readers. For example, a Year 4 pupil describes the Second World War as 'the deadliest military conflict in history'. However, a minority of key stage 2 pupils demonstrate spelling skills below those expected for their age and the quality of a few pupils' handwriting and presentation is often poor. This distracts from the sometimes good quality of their writing.

Most pupils develop good writing skills in Welsh. Foundation phase pupils use simple language patterns to write informative descriptions of themselves. Most pupils strengthen these skills in key stage 2, acquiring a wide vocabulary that they use well when writing dialogues, for example.

Most pupils develop good numeracy skills as they progress through the school. Foundation phase pupils acquire a sound understanding of the basic rules of number. For example, most reception pupils recall confidently one more or one less for numbers up to ten. By Year 2, most understand a range of measures and use this skill with increasing precision to identify objects longer than a metre and record their length in metres and centimetres. Pupils continue to build a good range of skills in key stage 2. For example, most pupils in Year 4 use simple formulae to calculate the perimeter and area of rectangles. In Year 6, many understand more advanced concepts, such as square and prime numbers, well. Across the school, most pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum at a suitable level. For example, pupils in Year 6 create accurate line graphs to show the change in temperature over time in Johannesburg as part of their 'Out of Africa' topic.

Many pupils develop strong ICT skills. Most use a wide range of programs and applications to support their work in other areas. For example, Year 2 pupils control the movement of a rocket across a screen to create right angles. They create videos and share them with others on an online platform. By Year 4, pupils create their own databases by generating individual records of their favourite footballers. A few pupils use sorting tools to answer questions such as, 'Who is the top goal scorer?' In Year 5, most pupils use email to share their work with their peers and in Year 6 they use online collaboration tools to work on the same document simultaneously.

Most pupils develop strong creative and performance skills. For example, Year 6 pupils work with professional filmmakers to script and produce an engaging film about environmental issues.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

As a result of the school's commitment to instilling strong values among pupils in line with its ethos, most are beginning to develop a good understanding of some issues facing the world, how to behave in an ethical manner and the importance of showing consideration for others. This is a consistent strength in most pupils throughout the school. For example, they demonstrate compassion when writing thoughtful prayers for people in need. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and demonstrate high levels of confidence. However, a few pupils do not always engage purposefully in tasks or work with sufficient independence.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. Nearly all attend school regularly and they understand the close link between good attendance and strong attainment. Most know how to stay safe online, with the help of the school mascot, 'Online Ollie', a character created by the pupils. Many pupils make sensible choices about what to eat and drink in order to stay healthy. They understand the importance of exercise. For example, many pupils take part in a wide range of physical activities during the school day and as part of after school clubs, such as the 'daily ten' and fitness classes.

In general, most pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. They are courteous to visitors, to other adults and to each other. Nearly all pupils' behaviour in daily worship is respectful. However, a very few pupils lack concentration during lessons, particularly during whole class introductions.

As part of their role in pupil voice groups, such as the school council, values committee and eco-committee, pupils contribute to action plans that lead to improvements in the school's provision. For example, pupils planned the development of an outdoor gymnasium on the key stage 2 yard. Pupils use this resource regularly to help them stay fit and healthy.

Most pupils collaborate appropriately in small groups and with a partner during lessons. Many share their ideas articulately and with consideration for the views of others. This supports pupils' learning well and they make good progress as a result. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 work together effectively in the woodland area to estimate the age of a tree based on their measurement of its circumference.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is good. All staff have positive working relationships with pupils. They treat them with kindness and consideration and generally have high expectations of their behaviour and achievement.

In many cases, teachers provide pupils with activities that engage them well and stimulate their interest. For example, following an imaginary invasion of spiders, pupils in Year 2 enjoy making pretend spider traps in the sand pit and spider bait in the mud kitchen as a stimulus for their writing. Teachers gauge the views of pupils appropriately by involving them in the planning of what and how they learn. For instance, pupils in the foundation phase suggest that the scooter track should have cones and barriers added to it to reflect the real life road works taking place in the centre of their town.

Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils purposefully and provide them with ways to ensure that they are successful in their learning. For example, in reception class, the 'successful spider' character reminds pupils that they need to look carefully at colours and count their number when carrying on a repeating pattern of coloured shapes. All teachers provide pupils with useful written and verbal feedback on the quality of their work. This indicates strengths and areas for improvement clearly and often results in identifiable improvements in pupils' skills. However, teachers do not always identify and address basic errors in spelling and poor presentation well enough. The opportunities teachers provide for pupils to reflect on their successes are particularly strong. As a result, most pupils develop as reflective learners and have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement.

In most cases, teachers plan activities that challenge pupils to develop new skills and achieve at a high level. Increasingly, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to select the level of difficulty of the task that they believe is appropriate for them. For example, in Year 3, pupils choose thoughtfully the complexity of calculations they wish to undertake when learning how to divide amounts of money by ten. However, across the school, adults over-direct pupils' learning too often, and there is a tendency to lead them step-by-step through their activities. This limits the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

Teachers have constructed a carefully planned curriculum that addresses the requirements of the National Curriculum, foundation phase and religious education with imagination. It provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy in other subjects and areas of learning. Planning for the exploration of

specific moral values every term is particularly effective and supports the school's ethos well. Arrangements for the development of pupils' ICT skills are very strong. Teachers plan imaginative and engaging opportunities for pupils to use these skills as they explore all areas of the curriculum.

The use of the school's extensive and well-developed outdoor areas to support learning, particularly in the foundation phase, is a strong feature. For instance, in reception class, a teaching assistant leads pupils in creating repeating sound patterns in the outdoor music area and, in Year 2, teachers plan for pupils to develop their creative skills when building a rocket from natural materials. Overall, teachers in the foundation phase deliver lessons and learning opportunities for pupils that align well with its ethos and philosophy. Teachers across the school use the woodland areas well to develop pupils' knowledge of the natural world and appreciation of their environment.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Leaders have developed effective tracking systems to monitor the progress of pupils. They reflect on this information well with teachers during regular pupil progress meetings and identify the specific needs of pupils of all abilities. They use the outcomes of these meetings purposefully to target support programmes to ensure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills at a suitable level. The school tracks the wellbeing of pupils closely. They know their pupils well and use this knowledge to put in place effective provision to nurture and support their wellbeing. For example, the school has introduced a programme to support vulnerable pupils with their emotional and social development. As a result, these pupils feel increasingly confident and able to engage with their learning. The school has developed strong links with specialist support agencies, such as the occupational therapist and the pupil referral service, to ensure that appropriate expertise is in place to support pupils with specific needs.

Parents receive very good information about their children's progress through termly parents' evenings and valuable end of year reports. The school's regular use of social media to update parents about their children's learning experiences, achievements and the daily life of the school is a strength. The school provides useful support to parents to help them assist their children's learning at home through beneficial family learning workshops. As a result of these measures, most parents feel well informed about their children's education and learning experiences and how to assist them with their learning when away from school.

The school has recently formalised its approach to its provision for health education to ensure good coverage of a range of topics over time, including how to stay safe online and the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, in Year 6, pupils learn about the dangers of smoking by looking in detail at its damaging impact on different parts of the body. The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school uses a wide variety of projects and initiatives to develop pupils' artistic, creative and performance skills. For example, creating artwork for display in the Tate gallery and films for broadcast on the school's online video channel provides pupils with a valuable stimulus for their work that encourages high standards.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness through stimulating daily worship sessions and the promotion of Christian morals and values. The school engages very well with its local community to support pupils' learning in a range of areas. For example, the school is an active supporter of the local community's involvement in a national gardening competition. This included participation in a national television programme that raised pupils' awareness of their role in the community.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher shares a strong and clear vision with all stakeholders. She has high expectations and ensures a good education and outcomes for all pupils. The deputy head and the senior leadership team support the headteacher well. All stakeholders work together effectively to create an active and caring ethos.

The headteacher distributes responsibilities effectively and promotes staff's professional learning successfully. Teachers work very closely within school to share their strengths and learn from each other in order to improve their own professional standards. A few members of staff also lead on areas of good practice in the consortium. A good example of this is the deputy head's work in sharing the school's successes and good practice in ICT. He is responsible for training staff from other schools who visit regularly to learn and improve their own practice.

Staff collaborate closely with staff from other schools to share effective practice. For example, the foundation phase leader hosts teachers from other schools and shares the school's use of the excellent outdoor resources. Staff visit other primary schools to gain ideas and knowledge about the most current curriculum changes and innovations. This has resulted in the school adapting the way it structures its curriculum and staffing responsibilities in preparation for the new curriculum.

Actions for judging the school's current standards are comprehensive. The self-evaluation report successfully identifies most key areas for improvement, based firmly on the findings of the school's effective monitoring procedures. The interpretation of pupil and parent questionnaires feeds well into improvement planning. Staff observe lessons and conduct learning walks regularly to gauge the quality of teaching and to identify what works well and areas for development. They look at the work of pupils, the quality of planning and the effectiveness of the learning environment to judge the quality of learning experiences and the standards that pupils achieve. These procedures often result in improved practice that maintains or raises standards. For example, self-evaluation procedures identified the need to raise standards in ICT. As a result, the school invested heavily in additional equipment and staff training and many pupils now demonstrate very strong ICT skills.

The school's comprehensive development plan arises directly from the self-evaluation process and identifies the main priorities clearly. The document is detailed and contains actions and responsibilities for evaluating their effectiveness. The actions are monitored for impact regularly.

The governing body has a comprehensive understanding of the school's performance and procedures. They are an important part of the self-evaluation and school improvement planning process. They analyse data thoroughly and use this knowledge to formulate purposeful targets. Governors are supportive to school leaders and they ensure a clear, strategic direction for the school. Through regular, focused visits and scheduled meetings, they challenge the school successfully to improve and maintain standards. Their careful monitoring of the school budget ensures the sensible and efficient use of money, linked to school development priorities.

The school is well resourced. The outdoor learning environment provides beneficial opportunities to support teaching and learning and enable staff to deliver a good standard of education, embracing the ethos of the foundation phase. Staff also use the wider area very well to enhance the pupils' education, including several forest areas, an outside gymnasium, allotment and pond area.

Senior leaders are successful in ensuring substantial extra funding through a variety of projects and grants. For example, the proceeds from grants have ensured the creation of a recording studio and a science classroom, and for the purchasing of IT equipment, all of which impact well on pupils' standards and creative development.

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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