



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

A report on

**Wyclif Independent Christian School
Wyndham Street
Machen
Caerphilly
CF83 8PU**

Date of inspection: January 2018

by

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

About Wyclif Independent Christian School

Wyclif Independent Christian School is an all-age co-educational independent day school operating from three sites in the village of Machen, near Caerphilly. The school was founded in 1982 and is a registered charity with a board of governors.

The school is organised into three sections. The primary school is from kindergarten to Year 4, the middle school from Year 5 to Year 8, and the senior school from Year 9 to Year 13. The total number of pupils across the school is 133. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although this varies in particular year groups across the school.

Many pupils travel from a wide catchment around Machen including from Newport, Cardiff, Pontypridd, Pontypool and Merthyr. Almost 30% of pupils are from minority-ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as their first language. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. The school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh. The school identifies about 5% of pupils as having additional learning needs, including a very few with a statement of special educational needs.

The school operates an open admissions policy and does not select by ability.

The school was last inspected in 2012, when the current headteacher was in post.

Wyclif is a Christian school that bases its educational philosophy on mainstream evangelical principles and concepts. The school aims 'to enable each pupil to develop his or her own potential to the full as far as possible'.

Summary

Pupils at Wyclif Independent Christian School have positive attitudes to their learning and they are extremely respectful and polite. Many pupils make strong progress in relation to their individual starting points and achieve well. By the end of Year 11, most pupils achieve consistently good outcomes in GCSE examinations.

Throughout the school, pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the high level of mutual respect and the extremely supportive relationships between teachers and pupils. However, overall, there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching and assessment, with shortcomings in a minority of lessons.

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is central to the vision and work of the school, and leaders promote this vision strongly. However, aspects of the school's strategic leadership require improvement, including the provision for tracking, monitoring and reporting on pupils' progress.

The school meets almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

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

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that it has a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under Part II Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, and by any report from the Fire Authority. *Note. This legislation is now superseded by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO 2005) 3.5 (a)(b)*

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure there is sufficient access so that emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely for all pupils, including those with special needs 5(g)

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Take steps to comply fully with the regulations for registration
- R2 Provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to solve problems, make choices and develop their independence
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment to match the best practice in the school
- R4 Ensure that assessment data is used effectively to inform teachers' planning and to provide additional support or challenge to pupils.
- R5 Increase the rigour of self-evaluation and quality of improvement planning to provide a clear strategic focus on enhancing teachers' professional learning and improving outcomes for pupils

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Standards: Good

The standards reached by many pupils across the school are high.

As they progress through the school, many pupils make strong progress in relation to their attainment prior to joining the school. They develop subject knowledge effectively, have secure recall of their previous learning and use this suitably to help them in their current work. Most pupils with additional learning needs make particularly strong progress.

Across the school, nearly all pupils develop their oracy skills to a high standard. They listen well to each other and to adults and speak assuredly in a range of different situations. For example, pupils in Year 4 talk eagerly about how they improve their writing, and Year 10 pupils offer their opinions enthusiastically about the character of Sherlock Holmes.

In the primary section of the school, most pupils develop their reading skills quickly. Pupils in the kindergarten use their knowledge of phonics well to help them decode new words. By Year 2, many pupils have a very positive attitude towards reading. They enjoy a variety of different books and become confident, fluent readers. As they progress further through the school, many pupils continue to improve their reading skills effectively. They read a wider range of texts and use their reading skills confidently to support their learning in other subjects. For example, many more able pupils in Year 9 use inference skilfully to decide whether Joan of Arc is a true heroine of France.

Most pupils develop their writing skills effectively as they move through the primary section of the school, such as Year 3 pupils writing thoughtful poems on light, and accurate descriptions of the ocean. As they progress on to the middle and senior schools, during English lessons many pupils write for an extensive range of different audiences using imaginative vocabulary and a wide range of appropriate punctuation. For example, Year 5 pupils write accurate instructions on how to make a milkshake, and Year 7 pupils write creative accounts for their 'Danny the Champion of the World' projects. Overall, however, throughout the school, pupils do not use their writing skills well enough in different contexts across the curriculum. A majority of pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of their work.

As they progress through the school, many pupils develop their numeracy and data handling skills well in mathematics lessons and apply them successfully in different contexts. For example, Year 1 pupils recognise and use common shapes to decorate their musical instruments, while Year 11 pupils use measuring and data skills accurately in chemistry to investigate the concentration of solutions.

Overall, the majority of pupils develop their thinking skills suitably. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Mostly this is because these pupils do not have enough opportunities to solve problems and think things through for themselves, or because the work does not stretch them enough.

Most pupils in the middle and senior school develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills suitably and apply them in a range of contexts. For example, pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 use their word processing skills and presentation software creatively to draft a school magazine or newsletter.

Overall, pupils' performance in standardised tests and external examinations is strong.

At the end of key stage 4, over the last three years, most pupils achieved the level 2 threshold (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A* to C) including English and mathematics. During this same period, the average number of pupils gaining five or more grades A* or A at GCSE is just over 40%. This percentage is broadly in line with the average for independent schools and well above the average for maintained schools in Wales. Overall, these are very high outcomes.

In the sixth form, over the last three years, pupils' performance at A level has been sound. In 2017, about 70% of all A level grades were A*-B, which is higher than the national average.

For the last three years, no pupil has left the school without a recognised qualification. At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remained in full-time education, and at the end of Year 13 most pupils progressed to higher education.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Across the school, pupils have high levels of wellbeing and positive attitudes to their learning. From the very youngest, pupils know that they have a trusted adult in the school whom they can turn to if they are worried or concerned about anything. Almost all pupils feel safe and secure and part of a caring family community.

Almost all pupils interact very well with each other, their teachers and other adults in lessons and at break and lunch times. They are extremely respectful and polite. In the senior school in particular, pupils relate in a mature manner to their teachers, other adults and visitors to the school.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to work together and support each other beyond the classroom. For example, in the primary school pupils act as buddies to others, and pupils from middle school help younger pupils with their reading. Pupils in the primary and middle schools represent their peers on student councils. These groups are starting to seek pupil opinions on different aspects of school life such as making improvements to the external school environment, including the purchase of play and storage equipment.

Pupils in the senior school help to co-ordinate Eisteddfod celebrations and sports day, and a very few senior school pupils take responsibility for helping others during lessons. For example, sixth-form pupils assist with the teaching of swimming. However, although other pupils in the senior school take on responsibilities as house leaders, generally pupils have limited opportunities to develop their leadership roles or to influence the work of the school.

Almost all pupils understand the importance of eating a healthy diet and taking regular exercise. They make the most of the opportunities provided to take part in

physical activities. For example, pupils participate enthusiastically in the school's annual fund-raising running event at which older pupils support younger pupils to complete the course.

Most pupils enjoy school and their lessons and they are proud to share their work. Almost all pupils concentrate well in lessons and engage positively in their learning. A few ask thoughtful questions to clarify or extend their understanding, particularly in the senior school. When given the opportunity, pupils generally work well independently. However, overall, throughout the school pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently or to seek a variety of solutions when they approach their work in lessons.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The curriculum promotes the school's aims and ethos well to provide an education based on Christian values and teaching that largely supports pupils to make suitable progress in their learning. The school places a particular emphasis on the core subjects and on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The range of courses provided at key stage 4 and in the sixth form generally meets the interests and abilities of most pupils. The school is particularly flexible in accommodating the choices of a few pupils who wish to study specific subjects at A level.

There are suitable arrangements for pupils to develop their ICT skills in the middle and senior schools. The school does not set out to develop pupils' ICT skills in the primary classes.

There is an appropriate range of visits and guest speakers that support pupils' learning well. For example, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to visit the Senedd and Houses of Parliament as well as overseas trips to Valencia. Pupils also benefit from visiting speakers who, for example, explain their work supporting the Rwanda Restored project that provides homes and education for orphaned children. These events help pupils develop an understanding of national institutions and services as well as an appreciation and respect for other cultures. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities on a regular basis.

Across the school there is considerable variability in the quality of teaching and assessment. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the high level of mutual respect and the extremely supportive working relationships between teachers and pupils. The close family atmosphere and teachers' frequent praise and encouragement helps engage pupils successfully and contributes well to their progress.

In many lessons, teachers' secure subject knowledge and enthusiasm help pupils to develop a particular interest in the topics they study and to acquire an assured understanding of key concepts and principles. In the majority of lessons, teachers' clear explanations and effective use of questioning build well on pupils' earlier learning and assist pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. In these lessons there is a strong focus on developing pupils' use of relevant subject-specific terminology.

In a minority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use a suitable range of engaging tasks and resources to challenge pupils to extend their thinking and to support their learning. These teachers focus well on developing pupils' understanding more deeply and providing opportunities for pupils to improve their work.

In a minority of lessons, teaching does not engage pupils successfully. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to think carefully, or to discuss their ideas with others, for example to solve problems. In these lessons, there is too much closed questioning and pupils are not encouraged to extend their responses. Further, too often tasks are not planned well enough to challenge and support pupils of differing abilities effectively. As a result, the majority of pupils in these lessons do not make suitable progress in developing their skills and understanding.

In most lessons, teachers provide constructive verbal feedback that motivates pupils, extends their understanding and helps them to improve the standard of their work. Overall, the quality of written feedback and the usefulness of teachers' comments, varies too much. In a minority of cases, teachers' comments contribute successfully to improvements in pupils' work. For example, in history many pupils strengthen their responses by exemplifying specific points more clearly when evaluating the achievements of King Alfred the Great. However, too often marking is cursory, praise is given too easily and there is not a consistent focus on improving pupils' spelling, grammar and presentation.

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is central to the work of the school. There is a strong sense of community and belonging in which nearly all pupils thrive in their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and display positive attitudes towards their learning. All staff know their pupils extremely well and offer support that nurtures strong working relationships.

Staff, pupils and parents work effectively together as an extended family to ensure pupils' high levels of wellbeing. The school's open-door policy and the opportunities teachers provide to help parents to support their child's learning reinforces this close working relationship. Teachers make effective use of the homework diary to support communication between school and home. Annual reports to parents celebrate pupils' achievements and their attitude to learning well, but do not always provide parents with enough detail about how their child can make further improvements in their learning.

Pupils with additional learning needs are identified promptly and receive beneficial support, including one-to-one teaching. This support enables these pupils to make strong progress towards both their learning and social targets. The school also makes effective use of outside agencies to support the specific needs of a very few pupils when necessary.

The school supports pupils effectively to develop their understanding about making healthy choices. For example, there are useful strategies to promote healthy

lifestyles such as agreeing exercise targets for pupils in their homework diaries. The health studies course taught from kindergarten to Year 5 includes relevant topics such as 'wonderful me', 'taking care of our world' road safety, and mental health. However, the provision for personal, social and health education in Years 7 to 10 is limited. In addition, the school provides little guidance for pupils to understand how they should remain safe online.

School leaders gather a range of useful data from pupil outcomes in tests and external examinations. However, little use is made of this data to inform teachers' planning and to provide additional support or challenge to pupils.

Overall, there are limited opportunities for pupils to undertake a range of responsibilities and to influence the work of the school, including offering their views about how and what they learn.

Although the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements, a very few health and safety issues were raised with the school during the inspection.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

Leaders have developed a clear vision for the school that they share successfully with all members of the school community. This vision is based on providing pupils with a Christian education that places a strong emphasis on positive attitudes towards learning and ensuring pupils' wellbeing. The school has an ethos of mutual support, which includes effective pastoral support for pupils and staff.

Many members of staff have a secure understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities. However, the school does not have any formal job descriptions to help strengthen this knowledge for all staff. For example, although the school has extended its leadership team with the appointment of four senior teachers, there is not enough clarity in their responsibilities. Currently the senior teachers' responsibilities are largely operational rather than strategic. Leaders organise informative weekly meetings for staff. However they do not use these meetings well enough to address school development priorities.

Governors are experienced and enthusiastic and know the day-to-day workings of the school well. They use their individual talents and interests, for example as an architect and in finance, to support the school effectively. Governors challenge the school suitably in areas such as in the standards that pupils achieve at GCSE. However, they do not monitor how well the school is addressing targets in the school development plan.

Leaders recently undertook a useful whole-school review by asking staff, pupils and parents for their views on the school's strengths and areas to improve. They used this information well to inform their latest self-evaluation report. However, the school does not consider a broad enough range of evidence to inform its improvement planning. For example, leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching or pupils' work well enough to evaluate effectively the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve.

In addition, the school does not have robust systems to manage the performance of staff

or to improve the quality of their teaching. At a strategic level, leaders do not have suitable processes for identifying and addressing individual staff development needs. As a result, there are still wide variations in the quality of learning and teaching and in the quality of written feedback to pupils at the school. Overall, the school has made limited progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

The school's treasurer, together with members of the governing body, manages the school's finances prudently. The school has a suitable number of well-qualified and experienced staff. Leaders mostly deploy them carefully to teach the curriculum appropriately and to provide pupils with a high level of pastoral care. The school's resources support teaching and learning suitably. Leaders make appropriate use of the school's limited space within their three sites to provide pupils with relevant learning areas. For example, they have developed the outdoor area in the primary school to provide pupils with improved facilities for outdoor play.

The school meets almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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

Excellent	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 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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