



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

A report on

**St Alban's R.C. Primary School
Mona Place
Tremorfa
CF24 2TG**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About St Alban's R.C. Primary School

St Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School is in Tremorfa, in the city of Cardiff. There are 174 pupils on roll between the ages of 4 and 11.

Fifty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average (18%). A majority of pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language and around 40% are from other ethnic backgrounds. Twenty-six per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school identifies that 35% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is well above the national average (21%).

Estyn does not inspect religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

The last inspection of the school was in November 2011. The current acting headteacher has been seconded to the school since September 2018.

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

During their time at school, most pupils make appropriate progress in the development of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, a minority of pupils across the school do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Most pupils with additional needs make satisfactory progress from their starting points. In particular, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress as they move through the school. Many pupils across the school have positive attitudes towards learning. However, over time the school's attendance levels do not compare well with those of similar schools.

Many teachers provide purposeful learning experiences that meet most pupils interests well. These experiences develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding appropriately as they move through school. Where teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that the pace of learning is good and this helps pupils to engage well with tasks. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always adapt work sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils or take account of their prior knowledge. There are appropriate systems in place to support pupils with additional learning needs.

The local authority and the diocese have not secured stable leadership for the school since the last inspection. There have been frequent changes to the school's leadership team and nearly all appointments to senior positions have been temporary. This instability in leadership has led to a lack of a consistent strategic direction for the school. Many of the school's systems and processes have changed frequently during this period resulting in a lack of coherence, for example in self-evaluation and improvement planning. The interim headteacher has addressed important issues at the school promptly. For example, she has restructured the senior leadership team and redefined the roles and responsibilities of staff. In addition, she has improved the opportunities that pupils have to influence the life and work of the school.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Establish stable and effective leadership
- R2 Ensure that evaluation processes focus firmly on pupils' skills and identify the most important areas for improvement
- R3 Ensure that teachers adapt activities to meet the needs of all learners and build on pupils' existing skills and knowledge
- R4 Improve pupils' reading skills
- R5 Raise levels of pupils' attendance
- R6 Address the safeguarding concerns identified during the inspection

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils enter school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age. During their time at school, they make appropriate progress in the development of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, a minority of pupils across the school do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Most pupils with additional needs make satisfactory progress from their starting points. In particular, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils eligible for free school meals tend to perform less well than other pupils.

Many pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They listen well to adults and to each other. A majority of pupils in Year 1 listen carefully to stories and use the language patterns and vocabulary of *The Boy with the Kind Hands* well to retell the story with good expression. Many older pupils speak clearly and use an increasing range of vocabulary in different contexts. For example, pupils in Year 4 explain clearly how chicks hatch, how to tell the difference between male and female chicks and what the hatched chicks need to thrive.

Most pupils in the reception class have a good understanding of the sounds that letters make and how these combine to make words. As a result, they read simple sentences well and show an awareness of basic punctuation. By Year 2, many pupils read a range of texts with increasing fluency and understanding. Many apply their reading skills successfully to research facts about their topic work, for example to identify interesting facts about Botswana. More able readers in Year 4 read with fluency and expression. They use a range of strategies to support their reading, such as reading the sentence again to help them to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words. In Year 6, many pupils read and apply their reading skills to support their learning appropriately. However, across key stage 2, pupils do not have a sufficient range of reading strategies to help them to read and understand a wide enough range of texts independently.

Many pupils have suitable writing skills. Younger pupils write short sentences well. They form letters correctly but these are not always consistent in size. As they progress through the foundation phase, more able pupils sequence short stories successfully and use a range of basic punctuation and spelling with increasing accuracy. In Year 2, many pupils write interesting leaflets to persuade people to buy a pirate ship or to explain why others should come to St Alban's school. In Year 6, many pupils understand the purpose of writing and how to write for different settings and audiences. More able pupils create tension for the reader when writing a story about fear. For example, they use interesting openers to interest and engage the reader, for example 'Cowering behind an old crate, we heard somebody approaching us!' However, many pupils do not apply their writing skills to a similar standard in their work across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their understanding of number through a range of purposeful activities. Most younger pupils identify numbers to 10 on a number line and the more able count on and back from given starting points

accurately. In Year 2, more able pupils add and subtract two digit numbers, read thermometers and recognise irregular and regular two-dimensional shapes. Many develop their understanding of money and give the correct change from a £1 by counting on from the cost of an item. In Year 5, most pupils use known number facts to solve problems, for instance they use their knowledge of times tables to estimate and calculate the area and perimeter of regular and irregular shapes. However, across key stage 2, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills often enough in their science and topic work.

Many pupils have appropriate ICT skills. In the foundation phase, many use tablet computers to create pictograms and insert photos, text and sounds into electronic books. Year 2 pupils program a toy to move it around a model of a safari park. Older pupils use a range of software programs appropriately. They create graphs to record the lengths of shadows. More able pupils create databases to record how they would spend £1000 on a shopping website and create graphs to illustrate their spending.

Most pupils enjoy learning Welsh and understand the importance of learning additional languages. Across the school, most pupils develop their Welsh skills to a level which is appropriate to their age and ability. Most reception pupils respond quickly to instructions and answer questions about the weather well. In Year 2, many pupils use familiar patterns and vocabulary with increasing confidence, for example when asking and answering questions about how they are feeling. In Year 6, many pupils give reasons for their answers when discussing what they like and dislike.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils across the school have positive attitudes towards learning. They concentrate on their activities and stay on task for appropriate lengths of time. In the foundation phase, a majority of pupils sustain their engagement in independent activities for suitable periods. Many pupils of all ages show interest in their work and are keen to discuss their learning with adults. For example, pupils in Year 2 talk with enthusiasm about how to look after the class tortoise and explain why they think there may be sharks in Cardiff Bay. In key stage 2, pupils work well together in pairs and small groups. For example, Year 6 pupils work well collaboratively to share information about the features of diary extracts and show respect for the contributions of others during a hot-seating activity. A very few pupils attend after-school sessions that link well to their interests, for example Lego club.

Many pupils feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they feel worried or upset. Many understand how to keep safe when using the internet, for example they know that they should not share personal information on line. However, a very few pupils talk about using computer games and social media sites that are not suitable for children of their age. Most pupils understand how to keep healthy, for example by taking part in physical activities, eating fresh fruit and vegetables and taking care of their teeth by brushing them regularly.

Over time the school's attendance levels do not compare well with those of similar schools. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than that of other pupils.

Most pupils in school behave well both in class and around the school. Many are polite and courteous to adults and to other pupils and show care and concern for others. For example, groups of pupils visit a home for elderly people regularly and take part in a range of activities with the residents. These include singing, sharing information from the internet and craft activities such as making love spoons. These motivate and engage the adults living in the home and provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about life in the wider community. Across the school, a few pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour at times and this has a negative impact on other pupils' wellbeing and learning.

Recently, all pupils in key stage 2 have taken on more prominent leadership roles in one of the groups that form the school Senedd. Pupils in each group elect a chair and vice chair and this has started to help them to understand the democratic voting system. Pupils from these groups have made changes that have had a positive impact on the life and work of the school, for example by changing the times of break times so that there are fewer pupils in the school's outdoor play areas at the same time. This has helped to ensure that all pupils have sufficient space to take part in physical activities at break and lunch times. Members of the rights respecting group chose new outdoor play equipment including bats, balls and skipping ropes and many pupils enjoy using these. As a result, pupils' behaviour at play time has improved.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Many teachers provide purposeful learning experiences that meet most pupils' interests well. These experiences develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding appropriately as they move through school.

Where teaching is most effective, teachers use interesting hooks to capture pupils' imagination. For example, Year 2 pupils search enthusiastically for the shapes that have disappeared from the suitcase that has been delivered to the class. A range of carefully planned activities leading to the discovery of the shapes ensure that most pupils use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively. In key stage 2, many teachers plan opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. For example, Year 6 pupils work in groups to sort popular soft drinks according to the amount of sugar they contain.

In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that the pace of learning is good and this helps pupils to engage well with tasks. In a few instances, especially in mathematics, teachers adapt activities successfully for pupils. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always adapt work sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils or to take account of their prior knowledge. As a result, a few teachers plan work that is too easy for pupils and that covers knowledge that pupils already have. Many activities in the foundation phase are led by adults and this limits opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Many teachers provide clear learning objectives and success criteria that enable pupils to understand the purpose of tasks and what they need to do to complete them successfully. Many teachers use effective questioning techniques to expand pupils' answers and to ensure that they understand what they have learnt. They provide pupils with effective verbal and written feedback about what they are doing well and

what they need to do to improve. They ensure that pupils have the opportunity to respond to feedback and to improve their work. This process is generally more effective in the teaching of literacy than in numeracy.

Teachers manage the behaviour of most pupils well. However, strategies to manage the behaviour of the very few pupils with more challenging behaviour do not support these pupils to engage with learning well enough.

The school's provision for developing reading is appropriate. Teachers draw upon a range of resources to develop pupils early phonic and reading skills. Across key stage 2, staff provide opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills through regular guided reading sessions. However, these sessions often focus on text extracts on photocopied sheets shared with the whole class rather than books that match pupils' reading abilities. This limits the opportunities that pupils have to read complete novels and other texts that are appropriate for their age and ability. Many older pupils rely on too narrow a range of reading strategies such as using the sounds that letters make or asking for help when they encounter unfamiliar text. As a result, pupils do not read books that are appropriate for their age or develop a love of reading. Many teachers provide good opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills. They teach a good range of text types and plan activities that develop pupils' understanding of these well. The school's focus on developing pupils' speaking skills has had a positive impact on their ability to write.

Teachers across the school identify opportunities in their plans for pupils to use their numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, Year 1 pupils develop their data handling skills by collecting and recording information about favourite minibests. However, planning to develop pupils' numeracy skills in real life contexts is limited. Teachers in the foundation phase provide good opportunities for pupils to work in the outdoors using the limited resources available.

The curriculum supports the Welsh culture and heritage well. Teachers provide interesting opportunities for pupils to learn about Wales through topic work and visits to local places of interest such as Llancaiach Fawr, Cardiff Castle, and the National Museum of Wales. Planning for Welsh enables staff to develop pupils' Welsh language skills systematically and most staff model how to use Welsh appropriately.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school has suitable systems in place to track and monitor the progress of pupils. Teachers use assessment information appropriately to plan provision for specific groups of learners, including interventions to support pupils' learning and emotional needs. There are efficient systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance including rewards for pupils who attend school regularly. However, these processes have not led to an overall improvement in pupils' attendance levels.

There are appropriate systems in place to support pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers develop purposeful individual development plans for pupils and review these regularly. Support staff use these plans successfully to provide a wide range of intervention programmes that help pupils to make suitable progress. The school uses the expertise of specialist support officers well to help teachers to cater for individual pupils' needs, for example to support travellers and ethnic minority pupils.

The school manages the behaviour of most pupils well. Staff work hard to support pupils with challenging behaviour, for instance by providing valuable opportunities for these learners to develop their social and emotional skills. However, the school's strategies to address the challenging behaviour of a very few pupils often result in them being removed from the learning environment or the school

The school has positive relationships with many parents. Teachers provide good opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children. They deliver sessions to help parents to learn Welsh and offer opportunities for them to work alongside their children. For example, parents of Year 1 pupils visited school to help their children to make parrots for the class rainforest.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about eating healthily and keeping active. There is a fruit tuck shop at playtime and staff encourage pupils to bring healthy food in their lunchboxes. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about exercise and nutrition, for example during Friday fun days when pupils engage in physical activities and discuss what it means to be healthy. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn the risks of substance misuse, to challenge stereotypes and to promote wellbeing.

The interim headteacher has improved opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to influence the work of the school. This work has started to have a positive impact on the school. For example, pupils who are digital developers have raised awareness of internet safety. However, opportunities for pupils to make choices about how and what they learn are at an early stage of development.

The school provides a suitable range of activities to develop pupils' creative skills. For example, pupils in Year 4 worked with local Welsh artist Chris Langley to create their own Welsh landscape paintings. A specialist music teacher delivered samba drumming sessions for pupils in Year 2 in order to provide valuable experiences of music from another culture. Pupils learned to use the drums to perform for their parents. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to perform in Christmas and Easter productions and the school Eisteddfod. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence, for example on school trips and visits. A residential trip to the Storey Arms outdoor education centre helps to develop pupils' collaborative skills.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop and reflect on their own values. It celebrates diversity well and as a result most pupils display kindness and consideration towards others.

A few safeguarding concerns were brought to the school's attention during the inspection. These were discussed with the interim headteacher.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The local authority and the diocese have not secured stable leadership for the school since the last inspection. There have been frequent changes to the school's leadership team and nearly all appointments to senior positions have been temporary. This instability in leadership has led to a lack of a consistent strategic direction for the school. As a result, the quality of teaching varies too much and this impacts on the progress that pupils make and their levels of wellbeing.

Many of the school's systems and processes have changed frequently during this period of instability resulting in a lack of coherence, for example in self-evaluation and improvement planning. In a few instances, evaluations of the school's work are too positive. For example the identification of improving trends in pupils' outcomes. In addition, some information used in the self-evaluation process is out of date, including the attendance data used to support an overall evaluation of pupils' wellbeing. The interim headteacher has started to involve teachers in monitoring activities such as observing lessons, listening to learners and looking at their work. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work on pupils' outcomes. Leaders have identified five priorities for improvement. The priorities for improving pupils' outcomes are very broad and are not specific enough to enable staff to measure the progress that they have made against these.

The interim headteacher has addressed important issues at the school promptly. For example, she has restructured the senior leadership team and redefined the roles and responsibilities of staff. She has improved the opportunities that teachers and teaching assistants have to improve their practice. Teaching assistants access a suitable range of relevant training to help them to provide support for pupils' skill development, for example in speaking, reading and mathematics. Recently, teachers have had valuable opportunities to visit other schools to observe effective practice, for example foundation phase teaching. Teachers have also started to support each other, for example by providing training for Welsh and ICT in staff meetings. As a result, teachers have a more consistent approach to teaching Welsh and pupils across the school use the language more frequently. The interim headteacher has focused well on motivating both staff and pupils and helping them to see the school as a purposeful environment that provides valuable opportunities for learning. In addition, she has improved the opportunities that pupils have to influence the life and work of the school. The governing body supports the school appropriately. A few governors have used their expertise and skill effectively, for example to support the school to address financial issues.

Overall, the school has an adequate range of resources to support pupils' learning. Leaders have spent funds appropriately, for example to update the mathematics scheme of work and to buy equipment for pupils to play with at break times. However, the school has limited resources for outdoor learning in the foundation phase and much of the equipment is old and is not attractive for pupils to use. Leaders use grant money effectively to support pupils who need additional help with learning. The demountable buildings used as classrooms for the Year 5 and 6 pupils and as a support room for pupils with additional needs are in a poor state of repair, both inside and outside. There is a bad odour from the drains on the school site. The smell from these is constant in the Year 5 and 6 area and intermittent in a corridor in the main building. This provides an unpleasant working environment for pupils and staff.

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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