



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

**A report on**

**St Patrick's R.C. Primary School**

**Fairfax Road  
Newport  
NP19 0HR**

**Date of inspection: June 2022**

**by**

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

## About St Patrick's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Patrick's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	242
Pupils of statutory school age	177
Number in nursery classes	37
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	17.7%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	8.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	34.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	25/04/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27/09/2011
Start date of inspection	06/06/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Overview

Pupils enjoy their time at the school very much. This is because they have positive relationships with their teachers and other staff, which help support a vibrant atmosphere around the school. On the whole, teaching is effective, and the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities. Both indoors and outdoors, the classrooms are stimulating and active learning areas. This assists most pupils to make strong progress in language and mathematics and achieve well from their starting points.

Staff successfully promote an ethos of care and support for pupils that encourages them to take responsibility for their well-being and behaviour. This contributes to their positive attitudes to learning. The school is a very diverse community that encourages pupils to develop confidence in their own, individual identity, while also developing a healthy respect for others. Pupils state openly that they feel safe and secure in and around the school, and that the staff encourage them to be happy and relaxed.

Teachers listen carefully to what the pupils want to learn about. They blend these ideas and interests into engaging lessons that encourage pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of different ways. Pupils' literacy skills progress particularly well, and many use these skills effectively across all areas of their learning. However, pupils' skills in speaking Welsh and their ability to use numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum are not as effective.

Leaders and governors work well together, and the new senior leadership team shares its responsibilities purposefully. They provide beneficial professional learning opportunities for staff that supports an effective whole school ethos where most staff feel valued for their contribution to school life. Leaders self-evaluate the school's work rigorously to plan for improvements. This is a thorough process. However, they attempt to do too much within individual targets and leaders need to streamline the targets in order to make them more manageable.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Ensure that the targets set for school improvement are manageable
- R2 Ensure that teaching promotes independent learning successfully between Year 3 and Year 6
- R3 Plan effectively to improve pupils' numeracy, digital competency and physical skills
- R4 Strengthen the provision for pupils to speak Welsh, and to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils have basic skills that are below their age. During their time at the school, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress and achieve well.

Most pupils listen attentively, speak clearly, and express their ideas confidently. Younger pupils discuss their work with adults and their peers enthusiastically, such as when they plant runner beans and tomatoes and discuss their growing cycle. Most older pupils communicate clearly in English. They offer answers and express opinions maturely. For example, in Year 6, most pupils discuss plans for Newport, 70 years into the future, intelligently.

The reading skills of most pupils are developing successfully. By the time pupils are seven years old, most read fluently and correctly, and they decode unfamiliar words accurately. By Year 6, most pupils read complex texts with good understanding. They are confident readers, and they glean relevant information from various texts and appropriate websites to enrich their work across the curriculum. For example, they have researched the economic and environmental backgrounds of a number of countries, as part of the topic on 'Around the World in Nine Days'.

Most younger pupils develop fine motor skills effectively while making animals from clay and decorating them. As a result, they progress and develop effective writing skills. Many pupils progress rapidly from mark making in the youngest classes to forming letters, words and sentences by the time they move to Year 1. Additionally, the majority of them spell correctly and punctuate purposefully. By Year 2, most pupils make good progress and use varied vocabulary and language patterns to write stories, letters and poems. For example, they describe their trip to Italy in a travel log to inform their families about their adventures.

By the time they reach the top of the school, most pupils write maturely in a wide range of contexts. Many pupils' present their written work neatly. They structure their work correctly and show a firm grasp of syntax and punctuation. Many create imaginative pieces in different genres, and they use metaphors and personifications purposefully to enrich their work. For example, older pupils create fact files and blogs that explore how to resolve conflicts, such as the Second World War.

The progress that most pupils make in developing their Welsh oracy skills as they travel through the school is limited. A few pupils use suitable phrases regularly in everyday situations. Most answer with basic responses during discussions with teachers and each other. However, too few pupils build their knowledge of the Welsh language systematically.

By the age of seven, many pupils understand and use mathematical principles effectively. They use numbers confidently, collect information and record their results in simple tables and charts. Most have a good understanding of the properties of different shapes and a notable example of this is making complex symmetrical patterns using pasta shapes in the Italian kitchen. They measure the heights of

plants accurately with a range of measuring equipment and experiment with capacity when building castles with different textures of sand. The minority of pupils use their mathematical skills well in authentic tasks, such as when they use money to buy tickets for a bus journey.

From Year 3 to Year 6, many pupils demonstrate sound mathematical skills, and the more able pupils develop sophisticated strategies to resolve problems, such as using co-ordinates in four quadrants confidently. They use data accurately and present it purposefully in various forms. For example, many pupils compare a range of temperatures in different countries using positive and negative numbers on charts and scatter graphs effectively. However, across the school, most pupils do not apply their mathematical skills in real-life situations well enough.

Most pupils' ICT skills are satisfactory across the school. Younger pupils use camera functions to create computer-based designs efficiently and they programme robots well to follow a set route. By the end of their time at school, most pupils create multimedia presentations and manipulate texts effectively. However, many pupils' do not create databases and spreadsheets confidently and they do not interrogate data with enough understanding.

Most pupils develop imaginative artistic skills. For example, older pupils emulate the work of modern French artists successfully, such as Seurat and Matisse. In addition, all pupils develop their creative skills purposefully, such as designing tapestries in school with family members to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils contribute positively to the school's welcoming and nurturing environment. Their behaviour is exemplary within classes and as they move around the school. They co-operate well on the playground and socialise easily with their peers whilst attending clubs, such as the breakfast club. They are polite and respectful of others' feelings and opinions, and interact sensibly with their friends, pupils in other classes and adults. For example, Year 6 pupils interact purposefully in groups to debate and arrange how to organise overseas trips that cost thirty thousand pounds.

Nearly all pupils state that they feel safe and happy in school and that they know who to turn to if they have any concerns about their own or other pupils' welfare. They express a warmth towards their relationships with the staff and feel confident that, if either poor behaviour or acts of bullying occur, the staff will resolve them swiftly and sensitively.

Most pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and how to maintain physical fitness. At break times, pupils enjoy eating fruit and other healthy snacks and speak eloquently about the benefits of a nutritious diet and the importance of re-hydrating their bodies with water. The pandemic has affected the opportunities for pupils to participate in a full curriculum of physical activity. However, nearly all pupils understand that physical exertion is important to keep their bodies healthy. For example, Year 2 pupils explain intelligently that after running after each other for extended periods, their hearts beat faster and they breathe heavily, and that this helps their bodies function better.

Most pupils know how to stay safe online and listen well to important messages in lessons. They pay close attention to displays around the school, which support their safety and explain coherently what to do if they encounter anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Most pupils celebrate the differences in others and embrace opportunities to discuss and observe individual talents that other pupils possess. For example, in the nursery class a few pupils watch with awe as one of their friends balances steadily on one leg, with arms outstretched, on the step of the large wooden bus. Nearly all pupils show that they care about their peers and are respectful towards familiar and unfamiliar adults. Their values, such as kindness, honesty and respect, influence all aspects of school life successfully. They adhere to school rules well, which are on display throughout the learning environment.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the detrimental effects of substance abuse and that equality, bullying and racism are important matters that can affect the fabric of their communities. Most pupils engage positively with the wide range of visitors that support the school to inform pupils about these key issues, such as the Crucial Crew officers. There are good opportunities for pupils to explore enterprise activities, such as making Advent flower arrangements to sell to their families.

Most pupils feel that it is important that they have the opportunity to join a pupil voice group and take on leadership roles within them. Pupil voice committees are effective within their own classes. However, the pandemic has reduced opportunities for these practices to extend to the whole school. As a result, the work carried out by the different groups in the school, such as eco-committees, Criw Cymraeg and the school council, has lacked effectiveness, on a whole school basis, since the pandemic began.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons. They engage fully with all aspects of their activities, show perseverance and utilise good independent strategies to resolve problems when they encounter challenges. For example, '3B4Me' encourages pupils to ask a friend and use a reference book or research tool before asking the teacher.

Most pupils demonstrate enjoyment in their learning. In Year 4, nearly all pupils are excited when tasked with designing and creating a Chinese rattle drum. Most pupils refer well to the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales to explain the focus of their learning, such as how their activities help them to become more ambitious and enterprising.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

Teachers are beginning to plan a breadth and depth of experiences, in line with the Curriculum for Wales, that stimulate and challenge most pupils to make progress. The experiences that teachers plan build systematically on pupils' knowledge, skills

and understanding, especially from nursery to Year 2. However, planned opportunities to promote pupils' independent learning are not as evident between Year 3 and Year 6.

Teachers work together successfully to try out innovative ideas that support pupils to achieve well. This is particularly true in the teaching of literacy skills. As a result of effective language lessons, most pupils develop successful reading, writing and oracy skills. For example, Year 6 pupils write thoughtful descriptions of an evacuee's life in rural Carmarthenshire using a wide range of imaginative vocabulary and a good understanding of the features of diary writing. The teaching of mathematics is secure across the school, and pupils receive comprehensive experiences to develop their understanding of mathematical principles. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and a lack of systematic planning limits the progress pupils make in the development of their digital skills.

Teachers encourage pupils to contribute their views about what they would like to learn and take note of pupils' suggestions sensibly when planning topics. They embrace these views and utilise them well as part of pupils' learning experiences, such as adapting the outdoor area to create a beach environment and developing a mock Italian restaurant. As a result, pupils are excited to share their experiences with others. For example, pupils talk about how pleased they are when their ideas are integrated into lessons that help them learn about Poland, its language and culture. Teachers plan well for pupils to investigate possible future career paths and the world of work. For example, older pupils explore the roles of everyday workers, such as paramedics, through 'Work Weeks' and 'Heroes' events.

The school's provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their well-being and identity successfully. However, although the curriculum takes good account of global events and the diversity of the world, it does not reflect the cultural heritage of Wales or promote the advantages of learning Welsh well enough. Many staff use basic Welsh appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. However, the provision does not support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills sufficiently well over time.

Most lessons move at a good pace, engage pupils and stimulate them to work hard and succeed. The professional relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff know their pupils well and provide well-tailored activities that meet the needs of most pupils, including those who may experience barriers to their learning. Support staff provide valuable help to these pupils, knowing when to intervene, or when to allow the pupil to persevere independently.

Most teachers use assessment activities and feedback purposefully during lessons. In the most effective practice, teachers use regular 'catch-up' sessions adeptly within lessons to assess the pace and quality of pupils' learning and to target any apathy or incorrect work effectively. For example, in nursery and reception, the teachers identify that, when using buckets, spades and sand to measure capacity, pupils need further practice to understand that half full also means half empty. Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to respond to their teachers' feedback and written comments, for example when the teacher asks them to identify the next steps in their own learning. Parents receive informative annual reports about their child's progress.

The school provides a vibrant and engaging learning environment where every space is maximised to support pupils' learning. Staff across the school create inviting spaces inside the building to accommodate, for example green screen technology, book nooks and comfortable areas where older pupils can work together on settees. Staff use the available outdoor spaces extensively, especially from nursery to Year 2, where there are well planned opportunities for pupils to make choices about what and how they learn. This includes play acting on a large wooden ship and investigating during bug hunts. The staff make beneficial use of the woodland school to enhance pupils' learning. This provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to apply skills in practical situations. Older pupils benefit from the outdoor areas too, participating in well-structured activities that target their life skills well, such as tent building and identifying dangers when walking home.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is a caring community, and its ethos is warm and friendly. Positive relationships are a strong feature, both between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves. Teachers and learning support staff know the pupils well and they respond sensitively and effectively to their emotional and social needs. This contributes significantly to their happiness and well-being. The caring approach and atmosphere help pupils to settle easily into school life. This has been particularly beneficial during the pandemic and has encouraged pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning and good co-operation skills.

The school has a comprehensive system to gather information about pupils' achievements as they move through the year groups. Staff use the tracking system to monitor the progress of pupils in their classes regularly. Staff assess pupils' achievements and their well-being purposefully, which results in teachers developing a deep understanding of the needs of all pupils. Where staff identify issues, the school provides valuable additional support and interventions to enhance pupils' learning and their personal and social development.

The wide range of intervention programmes to improve pupils' speaking and reading skills are structured and progressive and most pupils enjoy engaging in these activities. As a result, nearly all targeted pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Intervention sessions that focus on pupils' well-being are effective and they enable pupils to participate in lessons successfully. This enriches their self-esteem and social skills, and it enables them to share their thoughts and feelings with one another effectively. Additionally, strategies to improve parental involvement in their children's learning are developing well and these are yielding positive results for both parents and pupils.

The school works effectively with outside agencies to provide specialist support for pupils. For example, the local authority English as an additional language team provide useful resources for staff supporting pupils new to the language. They also arrange translation services to support parents in meetings about their children. The additional learning needs co-ordinator has worked closely with other local schools through their co-ordinators' group. This results in valuable support for staff to understand their changing roles in supporting pupils with additional needs.

When COVID restrictions allow, the school places a strong emphasis on providing a rich and varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and help to engage pupils in their learning. These include, for example, trips to the Welsh Folk Museum, the local wetlands and the nearby church, alongside residential trips for older pupils. Visits to the local food bank provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to support the homeless and disadvantaged families. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. Staff promote pupils' understanding of the importance of values such as tolerance and the entitlement to be free of harassment and discrimination successfully. Good examples are the views of older pupils when exploring the human rights of different communities during their studies of the Second World War and life in a rainforest in Côte D'Ivoire.

The school delivers effective acts of collective worship that explore human rights and make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. A positive element of these is that they are pupil-led, which develops the pupils' independent and communication skills successfully. The progressive and structured approach in personal and social lessons includes opportunities to explore issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion from across the world. However, there are too few opportunities to celebrate the heritage and culture of Wales itself.

Staff ensure that pupils' well-being and safety is an integral part of school life and it is at the forefront of their daily responsibilities. As a result, the safeguarding culture is robust, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn the importance of staying safe, for example by highlighting the dangers of substance misuse and teaching them internet safety rules. Additionally, any persistent absenteeism is monitored and addressed effectively, and the school addresses any incidents of perceived bullying well. Overall, safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher places pupils' well-being at the heart of the school's vision. The governing body support her philosophy and the staff share the leaders' ambitions and do their best for the pupils at the school. The staff ensure that a caring and inclusive atmosphere pervades school life, and they embrace the school's vision statement, 'Together We are One'. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, their care for each other and their behaviour.

New arrangements to distribute leadership roles and to hold leaders to account for the quality and impact of their work are developing appropriately. They draw effectively on staff skills to focus on improving the quality of teaching and to embed a shared understanding of professional values amongst staff. They are helping to ensure that most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

The school's processes to evaluate its effectiveness are sound and based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. The systems to improve quality include conducting 'book looks', observing teaching, reflecting on the views of parents and a thorough analysis of pupil progress data. For example, leaders have identified that opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in real-life situations, is not effective.

Leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development and the link between the self-evaluation activities and development planning is accurate. However, leaders do not prioritise their findings effectively and too many areas require attention within each target. As a result, the targets attempt to improve too many aspects of school life simultaneously, which is difficult to accomplish within set timescales.

Leaders have successfully kept in close touch with the wider school community throughout the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. They have enhanced their strong relationships with parents and carers, most of whom know that they can approach leaders and other staff, with any concerns or suggestions. They also know that leaders will listen to them, and act upon their discussions promptly.

Leaders ensure that staff make the best use of the accommodation and premises. This includes stimulating outdoor areas with beneficial resources, such as mud kitchens, a woodland school and water-based play areas. Leaders allocate resources effectively and utilise the pupil development grant sensibly to target pupils' needs. An example of this is the effective classroom support that teaching assistants provide for targeted pupils to ensure that they progress beneficially with their learning. Leaders promote effective practices to ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and advise parents on the importance of nutritious food in pupils' lunch boxes. Leaders have also shared the school's safeguarding culture effectively with all staff.

The governors are knowledgeable, and their regular input creates systematic improvements across the school. Governors are supportive of the acting headteacher and they hold her to account rigorously as critical friends. Leaders inform the governors effectively about pupils' learning and the need to improve provision, such as creating 'wish lists' to match the needs of curriculum areas. The governors participate in activities to gain direct understanding of the school's daily life, which benefits school improvement. For example, they undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work to measure its quality alongside teachers. This promotes a valuable understanding of the school's current practices. Governors monitor expenditure prudently and ensure that spending decisions match the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in outdoor learning equipment and school security.

Performance management procedures are effective. Leaders ensure that staff have access to relevant learning opportunities to support their professional development. These link closely with school development priorities and ensure that staff acquire skills that effectively support improvements in pupils' outcomes. A notable example of success is the training staff undertook to help them target the language development of pupils who do not speak English at home.

The school shares good practice with other schools locally and in other local authorities. This supports the school's capacity for continuous improvement and provides teachers with worthwhile opportunities to measure and share key aspects of their work with other colleagues, such as professional knowledge, teaching and leadership skills. This culture of ongoing professional learning creates an effective, caring provision that results in most pupils making good from their starting points.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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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