



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

**A report on**

**Holy Name V.R.C. School**

**Vergam Tce  
Fishguard  
Pembrokeshire  
SA65 9DF**

**Date of inspection: January 2023**

**by**

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

## About Holy Name V.R.C. School

Name of provider	Holy Name V.R.C. School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	VRC
Number of pupils on roll	138
Pupils of statutory school age	115
Number in nursery classes	*
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 23.0%)	5.0%
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 16.1%)	10.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/07/2014
Start date of inspection	30/01/2023

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

Holy Name Primary School is a caring, nurturing organisation that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy learning and talk with pride about their school. Staff promote respect for others, and they consistently model positive, calm and friendly approaches. These values are echoed well by the pupils. Most pupils engage positively with learning and make good progress overall. However, opportunities for pupils to transfer their numeracy skills across the curriculum and writing at length need developing further.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are a strength of the school. They listen carefully to instructions and apply themselves well to their learning. Teachers offer a wide range of interesting, authentic learning experiences, which help to make learning fun. However, at times teachers can over-direct learning, inhibiting pupils' growth in independence. The school has created a bespoke curriculum incorporating their local surroundings, values and beliefs. They have placed a high emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and bilingualism. Staff use Welsh throughout their teaching time, conversing in both languages with ease. Pupils respond appropriately, showing good understanding of both languages. This is a notable feature of the school.

The headteacher leads the school with the pupils' care and well-being at the heart of her vision. She provides measured, compassionate leadership. Governors know the school well. They are supportive and sufficiently challenge strategic plans. The partnership between parents and the school is good. Parents talk with pride about their school, particularly about the support the school gives them as parents and about providing adult Welsh lessons. Relationships with outside agencies are effective in collaborating with the school to provide the best support for pupils. Leaders evaluate the school's work thoroughly. They have clear processes and practices for monitoring and self-evaluation. Staff reflect well on the success of their practice and this has resulted in beneficial professional learning for staff, improved teaching and measurable progress for pupils.

## **Recommendations**

R1 Develop independent learning

R2 Provide opportunities for pupils to develop writing at length across the curriculum

R3 Provide opportunities to apply numeracy skills to problem-solving activities in real-life contexts

## **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 creating a whole school approach to developing bilingualism, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

On entry to the school, around half of the pupils begin with skills at or above those expected for their age. Many pupils, including pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding from their starting points during their time at the school.

Most pupils across the school listen well in lessons. They attend closely to instructions, communicate eloquently and display respect for those speaking, including their peers. Most respond enthusiastically when asked about their work and are happy to describe what they are doing and what they think about their work.

Most pupils develop beneficial reading skills and use them well to access learning across the curriculum. Many of the youngest pupils learn the sounds of letters quickly and, by Year 2, many pupils' reading skills are good. They attempt unfamiliar words using a variety of strategies confidently. By Year 6, most pupils read purposefully, and use their skills well when accessing challenging texts to support their learning. They discuss favourite authors enthusiastically, justify their choice and make deductions from the text using higher order reading skills effectively.

Most pupils develop well as writers. Many younger pupils enjoy mark making and begin to form letters with the correct orientation and regular size. By Year 2, many pupils use punctuation and grammar accurately and correctly spell familiar words. As pupils progress from Year 3 to Year 6, many write more independently in a wider range of genres. For example, in Year 5, pupils write letters to a family member, in role as a disciple witnessing a miracle. Many pupils edit their work thoughtfully and use more sophisticated vocabulary to improve their final drafts. However, due to a lack of opportunity, many pupils do not develop the skills to write at length in subjects across the curriculum.

Across the school, nearly all pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh are developing exceptionally well. They have a sound grasp of basic language patterns relative to their age and ability. They show a good understanding of familiar Welsh phrases and respond appropriately to questions and instructions given by their teachers and support staff. They demonstrate a positive attitude towards the language and enjoy engaging in simple conversations about themselves, their families and where they live. Many pupils read Welsh with good pronunciation and understanding of the text and their writing is developing competently.

During their time in school, most pupils develop useful mathematical skills. They carry out a variety of worthwhile practical activities that develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, the youngest pupils use a balance to compare the weight of different objects. By Year 2, many pupils name, sort and describe two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes accurately. Year 3 pupils successfully use standard units to measure the dimensions of objects. By the end of Year 4, many pupils have a sound grasp of multiplication and division, showing good understanding of the inverse relationship. Year 5 and 6 pupils competently find solutions for simple

algebra problems. They use a variety of strategies to calculate their answers and can explain what methods they prefer to use and why.

Across the school, most pupils develop valuable digital skills to support their learning. Most pupils use their skills to communicate ideas effectively using a range of means. These include making and taking pictures, producing information slides, posters and presentations, creating animations and interactive games. Younger pupils learn how digital programs can be used to control a floor robot to move around an obstacle. Many older pupils develop a good understanding of how coding can be used to direct their robot to manipulate objects positioned on a road map.

Most pupils develop their creativity and physical skills appropriately. They compare work of a range of artists, such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo, and use what they have learnt to influence their own illustration of fruit characters. During play and active learning in the outdoors, most learners develop confident and purposeful physical skills.

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

Nearly all pupils feel safe, secure and valued by staff. The school's strong ethos of respect and tolerance, along with high expectations of behaviour amongst staff, helps to ensure that pupils act with respect and consideration towards each other and adults. They are sure in their knowledge about whom to approach for advice if anything is worrying them and are confident that staff respond to any concerns they may have. Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of staying safe online and visits from the community police officer reinforce this aspect.

In class and around the school, the behaviour of nearly all pupils is very good. They move between classes and other areas in a polite and controlled way. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations and appreciate the 'pip and rip' approach, (praise in public, reprimand in private), when responding to unacceptable behaviour. They are well-mannered and show kindness and respect to all adults and each other.

Nearly all pupils are happy and demonstrate a positive attitude towards school and their learning. They are ready to participate in lessons and enjoy their learning experiences in a nurturing, caring and purposeful environment.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of looking after their own well-being. For example, they understand the importance of making healthy eating choices and the need to remain physically active. They make good use of the equipment on the yard at breaktimes, and pupils' independence and balance skills develop well, for example when they design their own mini adventure play area using tyres and pallets. The popular buddy bench in Greta's Garden provides pupils with a tranquil area for some quiet time, which many pupils appreciate, and this contributes well towards their mental well-being.

Nearly all pupils can draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being effectively. They use the 'Three before me' strategy during lessons when they face more challenging topics, and this enhances their problem-solving strategies. Nearly

all pupils understand the importance of maintaining positive attitudes to their work and they persevere and demonstrate resilience when completing tasks.

Most pupils are developing well as ambitious, confident and capable learners. However, their growth as independent learners is less well developed. For example, group work activities are often too teacher led, which constrains pupils' abilities to work independently.

Nearly all pupils care for each other and show compassion for others successfully. For instance, they participate in sponsored walks during Lent and prepare ribbons to raise funds to help refugees during the Ukraine conflict. As a result, most pupils are developing well as ethical and informed citizens and this increases pupils' awareness of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society.

Most pupils know that adults listen to their views and consider these when making decisions. Many pupils, including those with ALN, are willing to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities. Representatives undertake their work enthusiastically through a variety of activities and, by doing so, make a valuable contribution to the school's life and work. For example, Faith Ambassadors contribute to their own website and prepare suitable presentations. They also lead prayer and liturgy on heroes who flew seaplanes from RAF Fishguard during the First World War as part of Remembrance Day commemorations.

Socially, during lessons and around the school, nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of consideration and respect towards each other, staff and visitors. They show patience, allow others to participate and remain calm when others share differing points of view. They make very good use of the listening ladder to emphasise the need for pupils to focus on good listening skills. This has impacted positively on most pupils' ability to listen well.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

All staff foster effective relationships with pupils based on a respectful and supportive ethos. Pupils feel valued and listened to within a calm environment and, as a result, nearly all show a good standard of behaviour. Staff have high expectations of pupils and take every opportunity to reinforce and support the positive attitudes to learning that pupils display.

The school has a clear and well-understood mission statement that reflects the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. It is working effectively to develop a curriculum design that meets the needs of all pupils. Senior leaders make beneficial use of assessment data to inform their provision for learning interventions.

Together, teachers plan a range of broad and balanced topics for classes. Pupil voice plays a key part in determining the learning experiences offered. As a result, most pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. However, although pupils shape their learning, the activities delivered are often heavily directed by adults or completed using worksheets. These limit the opportunities for many pupils to deepen their thinking, try things out and develop as independent learners. A few younger learners also spend too long sitting on the carpet during lengthy introductions, which results in them losing interest.

In a few classes, staff support learners well by asking them appropriate questions whilst making good use of available resources. For example, a learning support assistant hooked in her learners and developed their understanding of earthquakes successfully by her creative use of a homemade seismometer resource. However, a few teachers ask too many closed questions which, although relevant, restrict the development of pupils' thinking skills.

Teachers use a worthwhile range of information and communication technology (ICT) programs to enable pupils to communicate their thinking creatively. For example, most pupils use these to generate informative posters, fact files, animations and interactive games.

Teachers provide engaging activities that develop older pupils' understanding of racism and the importance of tolerance. For example, most pupils clearly express opinions about Betty Campbell's impact on multiculturalism in Wales and how the 'Sisters of Mercy' supported others tirelessly whilst suffering much prejudice themselves.

All teachers model language effectively. They plan a variety of opportunities that ensure that most pupils develop sound mathematical, Welsh and English oracy skills. Many pupils speak well in front of others during religious services, practise daily drilling exercises and engage in discussion opportunities, which contribute to the growth of speaking and listening skills. However, teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply, develop and extend their mathematical and writing skills in a wider variety of tasks across the curriculum.

The school's curriculum offers engaging and real-life learning experiences both on and off-site, which inspire most pupils. For example, coding activities and competitions, visits to St David's Cathedral and the chance to make, taste and sell their own apple juice to the parent community capture the interests of pupils successfully.

Outside learning areas are developing well and include a range of zones, which enhance pupils' learning experiences successfully. For example, pupils use different areas purposefully to develop their drama skills, the ability to balance and jump and their gardening knowledge, and to contemplate quietly in the seated area of 'Greta's Garden'. Pupils take part in an inclusive and meaningful outdoor learning activity during Foraging Fridays.

Staff offered an effective blended learning provision during the lockdown periods. This was well researched and ensured the provision of accessible, quality mathematics and Welsh resources via live online teaching or through activities that pupils could complete in their own time.

Teachers display a sound subject knowledge, share relevant learning objectives and provide most pupils with clear explanations. A few teachers adapt learning sessions as they go along or make good use of cold tasks to assess the skills their learners need to develop before delivering a learning opportunity. These teachers use a final hot task to assess the success of their delivery in achieving the objectives set. For example, older pupils produce high quality letters inviting the Theatre Gwaun staff to participate in a photographic documentary. Older pupils have regular opportunities to

select the level of difficulty their work, and this helps most to maintain a high level of challenge.

Most teachers provide pupils with effective verbal and written feedback. Many pupils reflect thoughtfully on their work and teachers provide older pupils with a defined time to improve their work and help others with theirs.

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

The school is a very caring community where staff encourage pupils to contribute positively to its supportive and friendly ethos. The beneficial relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, are a strong feature of the school. Staff work industriously to ensure that pupils feel safe and well cared for. They understand pupils' needs well and they respond with sensitivity. They provide good quality support for pupils' mental and physical well-being. For example, through the daily, anonymous, check-in procedures for pupils, staff are immediately informed if individual pupils feel anxious or vulnerable for any reason.

This supportive and warm atmosphere helps nearly all pupils to settle easily to school life. It contributes significantly to their happiness in school and overall well-being. This matches the school's vision extremely well. These diligent and thoughtful practices encourage pupils to develop resilient attitudes to their learning and this ensures that pupils feel secure and ready to learn.

Through a range of pupil voice groups, the school develops beneficial opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life and work of the school. These groups include representation from across the school, such as those with ALN and pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Teachers provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to influence what and how they learn. For example, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils shared ideas on what they want to learn on volcanoes as part of their topic on 'Force of Nature'.

All pupils have a 'one page profile' that outlines what people appreciate about them, what is important to them and how they like be supported to learn. These profiles strengthen the school's understanding of each pupil and help staff further support learning and well-being. The school provides excellent support for pupils with ALN. This is a strength of the school. The very effective co-ordinator, along with all staff, ensures that there is swift identification, tracking and support for individual and groups of pupils. This support is accomplished through a range of bespoke programmes tailored effectively to pupils' needs. The school works effectively with outside agencies to enhance the ALN provision and provide timely support. For example, staff work well with the local authority speech and language therapist to assess the needs of pupils with speech and language difficulties and implement programmes of support. Staff work effectively to develop positive partnerships and supportive relationships with parents of pupils with ALN. Parents value the support their children receive. These arrangements ensure that targeted pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities.

The school works effectively to ensure that pupils develop a solid understanding of environmental issues. For example, pupils visited Newport beach to learn about plastic pollution and its effect on plankton. Pupils also petitioned the headteacher by

email to suggest that she encourages all staff and pupils to photocopy less to save on electricity, ink and paper.

Teachers provide an interesting range of opportunities for pupils to grasp the importance of inclusion and diversity. For example, older pupils have a well-considered understanding of different types of families and loving relationships and they discuss these with ease. They stress that it is perfectly alright to be different. This provision helps many pupils to appreciate and understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse world. For example, during a liturgy and prayer led by the school's Faith Ambassadors, pupils reflected on the injustice of racial tensions that led to the murder of Martin Luther King, recognising that stereotypes in society need challenging.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are strong and give no cause for concern. There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school and staff communicate well with each other to support pupils and understand their roles in keeping pupils safe.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher is an effective leader who leads by example. She has a clear vision for the school, which places pupils' spirituality, well-being and safety at the centre. She works closely with her staff to provide supportive leadership to set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour, while nurturing a well-being focused culture. Staff know the school well and work collaboratively as an effective team. Staff at all levels embed trusting and caring relationships in classrooms and, as a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy learning.

There are strong professional working relationships between staff and the headteacher, and this helps to create a happy school for pupils and their families, reflecting the school mission statement, 'Be happy and keep the faith.' Staff have clear responsibilities and are an important part of the school's development planning. For example, they work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding when designing the school's overall curriculum.

The headteacher and governors manage the school's finances efficiently. They deploy them sensibly in line with the school's development priorities. Leaders use the pupil development grant wisely to provide specific interventions across the school, such as emotional coaching sessions for pupils.

Leaders fully embrace national priorities. They work together with staff to purposefully create a relevant curriculum for their school community, with a passionate emphasis on bilingualism. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Both digital competence and Welsh oracy are now strong features of the school for both pupils and staff.

The school has approached ALN reform successfully, making significant improvements to provision for pupils. As a result, pupils with additional learning needs often make accelerated progress.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They understand their role and take their responsibilities seriously, for example in areas such as safeguarding and contributing purposefully to setting the school's strategic priorities. They are proactive in updating their own knowledge of national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales. Governors have an accurate and detailed picture of the school gained through first-hand visits, listening to pupils, regular discussions and informative reports from the headteacher. They provide leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge, while holding them to account on behalf of the local community in their role as critical friends.

Governors ensure that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements in place, and that there are suitable policies and procedures to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

There are strong processes for self-evaluation and school improvement within the school. Leaders use a range of purposeful monitoring activities to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development. They collect a range of first-hand evidence to inform their views of the school systematically. Leaders use the findings from the self-evaluation processes to develop the school's improvement plan effectively.

Relationships with parents are well developed. The school has open and effective lines of communication with them. Parents are regularly kept informed of school developments, for example by a weekly newsletter and the presence of staff at drop-off and pick-up times. Parents feel that the school is a safe and caring family environment and they appreciate how quickly leaders and staff respond to any concerns that they raise.

Leaders have created a constructive culture of professional learning and enquiry-based learning. This has had a positive effect on the delivery of teaching by staff, to better meet the needs of all pupils.

The senior leadership team manage the performance of all staff sensitively and robustly. Professional learning is carefully matched to the improvement needs of the school and through discussion with staff when embarking on performance management.

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

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Publication date: 03/04/2023