



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

**A report on**

**St Mary's & St Patrick's Catholic Primary School**

**Monica Street  
Maesteg  
CF34 9AY**

**Date of inspection: January 2023**

**by**

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

## About St Mary's & St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Name of provider	St Mary's & St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	217
Pupils of statutory school age	170
Number in nursery classes	21
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 31.2 %)	31.2%
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%)	1.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/03/2014
Start date of inspection	23/01/2023
Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for less than a year.	

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

St Mary's and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School provides a caring and inclusive environment for its pupils, which encourages them to learn, be happy and enjoy school life. Pupils participate willingly in the activities provided for them and use resources productively to improve their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. The purposeful working relationships that exist with most of their teachers and other staff support the school's vision of 'Learning Together' successfully.

Overall, the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities. Learning is particularly successful where the teaching is purposeful and challenges pupils to perform at their best. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils does not help them to improve their work effectively.

Most staff provide strong support, care and guidance for pupils in all aspects of school life. This motivates pupils to focus on their individual learning and well-being. They are keen to learn and they are ambitious and capable learners. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

Pupils develop good literacy skills, which includes writing in extended forms effectively. They also develop appropriate digital skills and their numeracy skills across the curriculum are satisfactory. Staff make the best use of the school grounds to provide engaging learning experiences in the outdoors for pupils.

Leaders evaluate the school's work to plan for improvements well. The new headteacher provides effective leadership. The senior leadership team, most of the staff and the governors share her clear vision, and they work together cohesively to ensure that the school improves.

Recent changes to monitoring and evaluation processes highlight the headteacher's determination to ensure success for the pupils and the community. The new monitoring practices and improvement plans align well to relevant training opportunities for staff to develop their skills, through purposeful professional learning courses.

## Recommendations

- R1 Address the site safety issue, identified at the time of inspection
- R2 Ensure that the new leadership practices improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching across the school
- R3 Provide effective opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and digital competency skills across the curriculum
- R4 Ensure that the quality of teachers' feedback targets the next steps in pupils' learning effectively

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

The majority of pupils enter the school with skills that are either at or above the expected level. During their time in school many pupils make effective progress from their start points. By the end of Year 6, most pupils speak, listen and read effectively and many write well. This includes many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible to free school meals.

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 create a fictional character using modelling clay and wooden logs. Most older pupils communicate clearly in English. They offer answers and express opinions maturely. For example, in Year 6, most pupils develop intelligent discussions as to whether owners should keep dogs on leads in public parks.

The reading skills of many pupils are developing successfully. By the time pupils are seven years old, many read fluently and correctly, and decode unfamiliar words accurately. By Year 6, many 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 research purposefully the different buildings, languages and food of a number of European countries, as part of their 'Around the World' topic.

Most younger pupils develop fine motor skills effectively, such as when they use scissors and mixing equipment to create a snake filled jelly. Many pupils progress appropriately from mark making in the youngest classes to forming letters, words and sentences by the time they move to Year 1. By Year 2, many pupils make good progress and use varied vocabulary and language patterns to begin to write short stories and letters. For example, they create a bubble map to describe the characteristics of different aliens dressed in underpants.

As pupils progress from Year 3 to Year 6, many write more independently in a wider range of genres. By the time they reach the top of the school, many pupils write maturely in a wide range of contexts and present their written work neatly. They structure their work correctly and show a firm grasp of syntax and punctuation. Their final pieces of work are generally of a good standard reflecting the positive progress they make from their individual starting points. Many create imaginative pieces and use persuasion and propaganda techniques successfully to enrich their work. For example, older pupils write a diary that explores how to express their emotions during a conflict, such as about the Second World War.

When speaking Welsh, most of the younger pupils develop suitable vocabulary and respond to commands and greetings successfully. By Year 2, many pupils use basic phrases confidently, such as when they express their feelings and discuss the weather. By Year 6, many pupils demonstrate a satisfactory recall of sentence structures and relevant vocabulary. As a result, most pupils' Welsh oracy skills develop appropriately.

Many pupils develop their mathematical understanding well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils develop their knowledge of number through rhymes and songs and outdoor learning opportunities, such as experimenting with capacity when filling different sized containers with sand and water. By Year 2, many pupils calculate the answers to number tasks using two-digit numbers confidently. They create tally charts, pictograms and bar graphs on favourite colours and the number of coloured sweets in a box. Older pupils use number operations successfully and develop a good understanding of shape and angles during practical activities. They develop effective strategies to identify common multiples using a Venn diagram, compare equivalent fractions and measure perimeter accurately. Additionally, older pupils use negative numbers well to compare temperatures over a year at the North and South Poles. However, many pupils do not apply their numeracy skills well enough across the curriculum.

Most pupils have satisfactory digital competency skills. Younger pupils use camera functions to create computer-based designs efficiently and program 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 do not interrogate data with enough understanding.

Most pupils develop good artistic and creative skills. For example, the youngest pupils role-play happily at the mud kitchen. Across the school, most pupils embrace opportunities to experiment creatively, such as Year 3 pupils using untuned percussion instruments to create the sound of a volcano erupting.

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

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is impeccable, and they are courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors. Most pupils show care and consideration for each other regularly. For example, pupils successfully lead the School Council and other pupil voice groups across the school. The very few pupils who need help to manage their emotions benefit from the effective support and resources provided. For example, pupils access the 'Calm Corner' in their classroom and use a range of techniques to calm their emotions.

The beneficial relationships between staff and pupils are strong. This enables nearly all pupils to engage in learning and to develop as confident contributors to school life. Most pupils show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and caring ethos. They feel that adults in the school listen to their views carefully and take them into account when considering decisions that affect them. For example, pupils celebrated the recent World Cup final and organised a competition successfully to predict the score.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning, take pride in their work, show keen levels of interest in lessons and talk enthusiastically about school life. For example, they listen attentively to teachers and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They collaborate successfully in groups and in pairs, and many make positive contributions to class discussions. As a result, nearly all pupils demonstrate a good level of respect for the contributions of others. Most pupils develop well as

confident and independent learners. For example, younger pupils measure the length of their feet using small beads independently.

Most pupils draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being effectively. For example, pupils experiencing friendship difficulties work with staff support in the 'Well-being House' to resolve issues amicably. Most younger pupils develop effective independent skills in activities, such as safely accessing and using resources confidently around the classroom and in outdoor areas.

Most pupils develop successfully as ethical, informed citizens. They are sensible and caring in their dealings with others and demonstrate a good understanding of their own and other pupils' needs and rights. For example, members of the Pastoral Council make thoughtful decisions and support younger pupils during playtimes. Additionally, the Playtime Peacemakers help to resolve any conflicts that occur on the yard. As a result, nearly all pupils show a strong awareness of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society.

Most pupils participate willingly and express imaginative opinions when offering ideas about the school's curriculum. Most talk with enthusiasm about their lessons and pupils regularly contribute to the classes' 'We Love Learning' boards so that the teachers can incorporate pupils' ideas and interests into lessons.

Nearly all pupils take an active part in the life of the school and the pupil voice groups are very inclusive. Their representatives demonstrate a range of good leadership skills. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and representatives are proud of their valuable contributions. This includes making presentations to classes on matters that are important to them, such as the rights of children.

Many pupils develop effective entrepreneurial skills. For example, pupils in the gardening club maintain the school garden and grow and sell daffodils on St David's Day. Pupil voice groups contribute considerably, through social enterprise. For example, the Pastoral Council leads the school effectively in fundraising for a range of charities, including a local family charity and a Catholic charity for overseas pupils. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of social and global concerns.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and choose to eat fruit at breaktimes. They understand the benefits of physical exercise on their health, such as participating in daily physical tasks. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the importance of good physical and mental well-being. For example, pupils who participate in after-school sports clubs explain the importance of regular exercise effectively and its positive impact on their heart health and general fitness.

Nearly all pupils understand the need to be careful when using the internet, including the importance of using passwords safely. In discussions, nearly all pupils are keen to share what they learn about e-safety. This impacts positively on their well-being and general life skills.

## Teaching and learning experiences

The lively pace of many lessons engages pupils' interests well and motivates them to persevere and succeed. On the whole, teachers ensure that pupils engage in a good range of experiences to develop their literacy skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. For example, in Year 6, the teacher provides stimulating opportunities for pupils to investigate a crime scene. As a result, they measure the perimeter and area of the room where the crime took place and discuss confidently how to create a jail cell digitally to imprison criminals.

Effective and challenging teaching ensures that reception and nursery pupils list the characteristics of a mythical character accurately and mark make carefully with chalk to match patterns. Additionally, through effective and engaging tasks, delivered by staff, Year 2 pupils write descriptions about a spaceman's adventures on a planet, using purposeful sentence structures.

The working relationship between most staff and pupils is strong. As a result, most of the teaching is effective. However, where lessons lack sufficient impact on pupils' learning, teaching is too static, tasks lack focus and are not organised well enough. On the whole, staff know pupils well and provide purposeful activities to meet their needs, including those who need support with their work. Teaching assistants provide these pupils with beneficial support and know when to intervene and when to allow them to work independently.

Most teachers and support staff plan thoroughly to help pupils make good progress in their literacy skills through purposeful tasks. For example, the youngest pupils use extended vocabulary well while building towers using three dimensional shapes. Additionally, well-planned activities challenge Year 5 pupils to research Scott's expedition to Antarctica and to study the impact of individuals on global matters, such as Rosa Parks' fight against injustices. However, the provision for pupils to apply their numeracy and digital skills, from year-to-year and across the curriculum, is inconsistent and underdeveloped.

Most teachers are beginning to plan a variety of engaging experiences, in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales, which motivate many pupils to make good progress from their starting points. For example, teachers provide stimulating activities that promote pupils' interest in their local area, such as Year 3 pupils studying the mining industry in the Llynfi Valley.

Provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their well-being successfully. The curriculum gives good consideration to international events and the diversity of the world, such as the impact of war on Ukraine. Teachers also plan activities that reflect the cultural heritage of Wales successfully, such as studying and comparing Welsh artists. Most staff promote the advantages of learning Welsh effectively and use Welsh phrases often in their daily practices.

Most teachers encourage pupils to contribute suggestions sensibly when planning topics. They use these views well as part of pupils' learning experiences and, as a result, pupils are excited to share their experiences with others. In Year 1, pupils talk positively about having their ideas integrated into tasks, when using magnifying glasses to measure potions accurately. Additionally, innovative teaching in Year 4

challenges pupils' understanding of how lungs inflate and deflate, by using balloons to imitate differing lung capacities.

Teachers plan well for pupils to investigate possible future career paths and the world of work. For example, older pupils explore the roles of the emergency services, such as lifeboat crews and community police officers.

Teachers use assessment activities appropriately when responding to pupils' work. In the most effective practice, teachers share skilful feedback orally to assess the quality of pupils' learning and target any needs promptly. However, practices to respond to pupils' work are not consistent and not embedded across the school. This hinders pupils' understanding of how to improve their work and of how to progress to the next steps in their learning. At the end of the year, parents and carers receive suitable annual reports on their child's progress.

The school provides a calm and interesting learning environment indoors where all areas and displays are used purposefully to support pupils' learning. Staff also make the best use of the outdoor areas to promote pupils' learning, especially for pupils up to Year 2. This includes an expansive open-air kitchen and the nearby church's prayer garden.

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

The school is a supportive community, and staff encourage pupils to contribute to its caring and friendly ethos successfully. The strong relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a positive feature of the school. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and they respond instinctively to the pupils' emotional and social needs. Through effective use of the 'Well-being House' and calming areas in classes, the school provides purposeful support for pupils' physical and emotional health and well-being. This reassuring and warm atmosphere helps nearly all pupils to settle well into school life and contributes positively to their contentment and exemplary behaviour. These thoughtful and caring practices encourage pupils to engage in the life of the school and in their own learning beneficially.

The provision for pupils identified as having ALN is sound. The school's ALN co-ordinator works effectively in partnership with the headteacher and staff members. Together, they ensure that pupils' needs are identified early, and that the tracking and support for individuals and groups of pupils begin promptly. Thorough pupil progress reviews result in staff members having a deeper understanding of the needs of pupils and specific targets to support their learning. The school interacts beneficially with a range of specialist services to secure specialist support for pupils with a range of academic, physical, emotional and social needs. These arrangements ensure that nearly all targeted pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities.

The school ensures that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities take on leadership roles effectively through a variety of purposeful groups. This provision develops their understanding of the importance of active citizenship well. As a result, the school provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to participate in making decisions to improve the school. For example, members of the School Council wrote letters to

local councillors to secure a grant for the school choir to travel to Birmingham to participate in the 'Young Voices' concert.

The school provides a range of beneficial opportunities that help pupils to develop a good understanding of their Welsh heritage. For example, as part of a local history project, pupils studied Welsh mining through the ages, which included a visit to the local South Wales Miners' Museum. The school places a strong emphasis on providing a rich and varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. For example, these include visits to The National Folk Museum of Wales to study the history of Welsh life. These experiences provide varied opportunities for pupils to learn about the history of their own town and the wider country.

The school effectively promotes pupils' understanding of Welsh culture and works effectively with the Urdd, who support the school well. For example, during the World Cup the school celebrated 'Jambori, Cwpan y Byd' with a Welsh folk musician, and it celebrates Welsh culture in its St David's Day Eisteddfod. The active Criw Cymraeg promote the Welsh language conscientiously and they design and display posters to highlight that the Welsh language is 'amazing'. This type of effective provision allows pupils to engage willingly with school life and to feel proud of the school's family ethos.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their local and church communities. They use the experiences positively so that pupils develop an understanding that caring for others is important. For example, pupils support a local food bank by taking part in a harvest festival, which contributes to pupils' understanding that supporting the less fortunate is important in society.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance are efficient and the impact of the school's initiatives is beginning to improve attendance and punctuality. Staff communicate well with each other to support pupils and understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and give no cause for concern. However, inspectors brought an issue related to site safety to the attention of school leaders during the inspection.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to their roles within the past year. They have worked diligently with the school's new senior leadership team to implement improvements in the school's strategic and day-to-day practices. In a short space of time, the headteacher and senior leaders have identified important areas to develop in the school's monitoring and evaluation practices and in the school's provision.

The headteacher focuses on placing the school at the centre of its community and sets the well-being of pupils and their families at the heart of this vision. The governors and most of the staff support this philosophy and implement it into their roles effectively. As a result, leaders ensure that a caring and supportive ethos exists throughout the school, which the pupils embrace willingly. This promotes inclusivity successfully, and has a beneficial effect on pupils' readiness to learn and their caring attitudes.

Leaders allocate roles of responsibility sensibly and the headteacher is beginning to hold staff to account purposefully for the quality and impact of their work. Leaders are beginning to use the findings of monitoring practices effectively to evaluate the quality of the school's provision. This includes addressing shortcomings in the effectiveness and consistency of teaching and developing a common understanding of professional values among all staff.

Leaders' processes to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are thorough and based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Systems to improve the impact of the school's provision include detailed scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing internal and external data on pupils' progress. Additionally, leaders gather the views of other stakeholders about the school to inform their practices. For example, they consider the views of parents and carers and act on any findings purposefully, such as making the school accessible to parents so that they can attend craft workshops with their children.

The evaluation and review of the school, conducted by the headteacher and senior leaders since her appointment, provide leaders with a clearer picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The link between self-evaluation activities and improvement planning is accurate. As a result, leaders use their findings effectively and set suitable targets to move the school forward. In addition, leaders share the school's safeguarding culture with all staff robustly.

Leaders keep in close contact with the wider school community and with vulnerable families. They build on the strong relationships that exist with parents and carers and support them empathetically. This includes attending virtual meetings with health workers and other support agencies. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and advise parents and carers on the importance of nutritious food in their lunch boxes.

Leaders ensure that staff make the best use of the premises and the school grounds. For example, they enhance the outdoor learning environment effectively with stimulating equipment, such as creating the 'Well-being House' for nurture activities. Additionally, leaders allocate resources in the classrooms creatively and use the pupil development grant wisely to provide specific interventions across the school by staff. As a result, the support staff provide beneficial support to move pupils forward with their learning.

Governors are knowledgeable and their regular input creates systematic improvements throughout the school. They are very supportive of the new headteacher and work with her and other senior leaders sensibly, questioning the impact of their work as critical friends. The headteacher informs governors about pupils' learning regularly. Since her appointment, she advises them realistically and honestly on how to improve provision, such as the need to improve pupils' numeracy skills and the school's assessment practices. Governors develop a first-hand understanding of the school's activities and they undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work to measure its quality alongside teachers. Governors monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending decisions are in line with the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in mathematics programmes and digital hardware.

The headteacher ensures that staff access effective learning opportunities to support their professional development and match their individual needs. These link well with school improvement priorities. The school shares effective practices with local schools. This provides valuable opportunities for teachers to compare and share their effectiveness with other professionals. As a result, the professional learning opportunities support the school's capacity for continuous improvement beneficially.

## 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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