



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

**A report on**

**Our Lady of the Angels R.C School**

**Victoria Street  
Cwmbran  
Torfaen  
NP44 3JR**

**Date of inspection: March 2023**

**by**

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

## About Our Lady of the Angels R.C School

Name of provider	Our Lady of the Angels R.C School
Local authority	Torfaen County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	213
Pupils of statutory school age	166
Number in nursery classes	25
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%)	18.1%
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%)	13.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	15.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/06/2014
Start date of inspection	27/03/2023

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](http://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' well-being is at the heart of Our Lady of The Angels School. Many pupils enjoy school and feel happy and safe during their time there. Pupils' behaviour is good, and they are respectful to teachers, peers, and visitors. The school's provision for supporting pupils with emotional and well-being needs is a particular strength. Pupils feel well supported and know they will be listened to, and have their emotional needs met.

Many pupils start school with communication and numeracy skills at or above those expected for their age. Over time, most pupils including those with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in their learning. They develop strong oracy and reading skills and develop a sound competency in their mathematical skills. However, they do not always have opportunity to apply these skills well enough across other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers are beginning to consider how they plan for interesting and authentic learning experiences to reflect the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. They plan lessons that build on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. Feedback from teachers and staff supports pupils' progress appropriately. However, at times teachers over-direct learning and do not always provide pupils with the right level of challenge in their lessons and activities. As a result, these this limits pupils' opportunities to develop as independent learners and thinkers.

The school is beginning to create a bespoke curriculum to reflect their local area, values and beliefs. However, arrangements to plan for progression in the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, Welsh language and digital skills are not well developed. They do not always support pupils to achieve as well as they could. In addition, there are limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the culturally diverse nature of Wales.

The acting headteacher provides effective leadership and encourages a strong team ethos within the school. Leaders work well with the governing body to review the strengths and areas of improvement within the school. However, these plans do not always focus sharply enough on improving outcomes for pupils.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve planning and provision to support the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum
- R2 Sharpen self-evaluation processes to focus more robustly on considering the difference the school's provision makes to pupils' progress and well-being
- R3 Ensure that teaching consistently provides opportunities to develop pupils' independent learning skills and challenges all pupils appropriately

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time at school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress from their individual starting points.

Standards of oracy are good across the school. Most pupils talk confidently about their learning and listen well to their peers and teachers. They ask and respond respectfully to questions. As they move through the school, many pupils develop a widening range of vocabulary and continue to develop their speaking and listening skills appropriately. For example, younger pupils speak confidently and excitedly when talking about beavers within their topic work.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing well across the school. The youngest pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read familiar and unfamiliar words. As pupils progress, they read with increasing accuracy and fluency. They use these skills well to help them to understand the key concepts within texts and gather and interpret information. By the time they leave the school, most pupils read confidently and are competent readers.

Most pupils' writing is developing appropriately across the school. Younger pupils are beginning to record their ideas through making marks, forming legible letters, and writing simple words. By the end of Year 2, most pupils write effectively in a range of different ways. They choose vocabulary carefully and use simple punctuation accurately. As their writing skills develop, a majority of pupils use adjectives, varying sentence structures and appropriate punctuation to enhance their work and engage the reader. Older pupils write in a limited range of styles appropriately, for instance to retell the Welsh tale of the "Golden Harp". However, they do not use their skills often enough to write at length.

Most younger pupils' Welsh language skills are developing appropriately. They enjoy singing a range of Welsh songs and rhymes and are beginning to use simple greetings. The majority of older pupils respond suitably to simple questions with clear pronunciation and intonation in Welsh lessons. However, most pupils do not use Welsh language confidently outside of planned Welsh activities.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. For example, younger pupils use everyday objects to count to 20 and use an appropriate range of mathematical vocabulary in their play. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a secure grasp of appropriate number facts and handle data correctly. Many older pupils sustain this progress well, particularly in their use of number. They develop their number skills competently and understand place value. They add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers including decimals confidently. When given the opportunity, most pupils use their problem-solving skills appropriately in relevant contexts across the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils collect and present data for a holiday company to find out which is the most popular activity. However, across the school there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their numeracy skills progressively across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop a suitable range of digital skills to support their learning and to help them communicate purposefully. For example, younger pupils find images and use graphic tools to illustrate stories. Older pupils create presentations to describe the lives of coal miners in the past and make short films to retell the last days of Jesus on his way to the cross. However, pupils do not develop the full range of digital skills. For example, they have a limited understanding of how to work with spreadsheets and databases.

Pupils' physical skills are developing well throughout the school. The youngest pupils move confidently around the indoor and outdoor classroom and are developing good co-ordination when using small tools and playing with large building resources. Most older pupils participate enthusiastically in PE lessons and develop a useful range of skills.

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

The school is a warm and welcoming environment. Many pupils feel safe, secure, and happy in school. They enjoy participating fully and actively in school life. Nearly all pupils follow the school rules and behave well in class and when moving around the school. They know what to do if they are worried or anxious and they feel well supported by staff and their peers. For example, older pupils check in on the younger pupils in their role as 'Guardian Angels'. They provide valuable emotional support as well as listening to them read and being a 'buddy' when attending the local Catholic church. Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and others in their school community.

Many pupils participate well in lessons. Older pupils have a range of responsibilities at the school that develop their leadership skills effectively. They relish the opportunity to lead extracurricular activities such as prayer, choir, art and dance clubs, and these have a positive impact on pupil well-being and relationships across the school.

Most pupils are beginning to use feedback from teachers well to help them to improve their work. When given the opportunity, most pupils work well independently, in pairs and in small groups. However, across the school many pupils are hesitant to make mistakes, take risks or try things out for themselves. As a result, they do not always develop the independence, perseverance, or resilience skills they need to use when faced with challenge.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Most pupils know how to keep themselves fit and healthy by making good choices in relation to food and drink. They take regular exercise and understand the importance of being active. However, a few pupils bring unhealthy snacks to eat at break times.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff develop strong working relationships with pupils. They encourage pupils to be respectful and courteous, which leads to the supportive ethos that permeates the school. This establishes a good inclusive environment for learning.

The majority of lessons are well paced and ensure that most pupils are engaged. Where teaching is most effective, teachers pause learning purposefully to check pupils' understanding or to allow them to share their ideas. They provide useful prompts for pupils to follow, either orally or in writing. In most cases, teachers and staff use questions well to help pupils explain their learning. However, across the school, teachers do not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to become independent thinkers and learners.

Many teachers explain new concepts well and provide clear guidance that enable pupils to undertake their work appropriately. They explain tasks clearly to pupils and help them understand what to do and how to do it. Most teachers share learning objectives appropriately and use success criteria consistently so that pupils develop confidence to accurately evaluate their own work and that of their peers. However, the success criteria for tasks do not always focus specifically enough on the skills to be developed through the learning. As a result, feedback from teachers and peers does not always move pupils forward in their learning as well as it should.

There are suitable systems for teachers to track pupils' progress and to identify those who may need additional support. Pupils requiring support are monitored and evaluated closely to ensure that they make suitable progress. Reports to parents are clear and informative. They give useful information about their child's progress and personal and social skills along with improvement targets for the future.

Staff collaborate purposefully to develop a whole-school vision for the curriculum. They carefully consider how the values of the school can be used initially in their curriculum design process. Leaders give autonomy to class teachers to develop learning in line with the whole school termly theme. This allows teachers the freedom to respond to the views and interest of the pupils within their classes.

The school is beginning to take advantage of opportunities to enrich the curriculum, for example through local educational trips, such as those to Big Pit and Green Meadow Farm. Staff are developing a positive culture for reading across the school. The systematic approach to phonics is well supported by a range of useful opportunities for pupils to read regularly to their peers, to staff and at home. The school provides suitable arrangements for pupils to develop their use of Welsh within Welsh lessons. However, teachers do not have a shared understanding of how to plan for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and language skills. As a result, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use or develop their skills in their work across the curriculum at the level of which they are capable.

The school has a strong ethos to promote and support pupils' well-being and emotional health. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to investigate and understand the culturally diverse nature of Wales. Staff make good use of the outdoor areas to support pupils' learning. For example, the provision for the youngest pupils has been suitably developed to support learning through play. However, overall, the provision for pupils to learn skills relevant to the outdoor learning environment is less well developed.

## Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and nurturing community that prioritises the care, support and guidance of its pupils and staff. As a result, both staff and pupils feel cared for and highly valued. Parents value the support the school gives to their children. Teachers and staff have good relationships with pupils and parents.

The support for pupils' well-being is a particular strength of the school. Staff trained to deliver specialised individual emotional health and well-being sessions provide beneficial support to the most vulnerable pupils. For example, the school's programme to support those pupils' experiencing trauma as a result of the COVID pandemic has a positive effect in improving individual pupils' emotional health and well-being and engagement in their learning.

Pupils with ALN are supported well at the school. The ALN leader has a good understanding of the individual needs of the pupils with ALN have at the school. The co-ordination of the support for pupils across the school is effective. Action plans are clear, monitored regularly and evaluated effectively to support improvement at an individual, class and whole-school level. Across the school there are a beneficial range of interventions that improve pupils' literacy skills. These interventions are highly valued by parents and recognise the positive impact that they have on their children. The school works well with a range of external partners such as specialist teachers to provide additional support to pupils who require it. Overall, ALN pupils have clear targets and make good progress in their learning.

The school provides beneficial support for those pupils who require a more specialised approach to learning through a small class provision. Here staff deliver a more individualised approach and use their knowledge of the individual needs of the pupils to teach targeted learning activities. They take good notice of when pupils are ready to learn and respond swiftly to engage them, for example by using prepared activities in 'grab bags' that match the specific targets for individual pupils. As a result, around half of the pupils in the small class provision return to their mainstream class successfully after a period of sustained support. However, there are few opportunities for pupils with more complex additional needs to spend time with their peers within their year group classes and as a result this limits their access to suitable role models and their ability to make friendships and build relationships.

The school offers a suitable range of groups for pupils to develop their leadership skills. For example, the groups to promote the Welsh language have a positive impact in promoting the phrase of the week and there are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to make connections with the local diocese through community action projects. However, the school council is not well established. Pupils are not able to exercise their right to elect members or run for positions for leadership themselves. and as a result, it has a limited impact on the life of the school.

The school provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop morally. As a result, nearly all pupils have a clear grasp of what is right and wrong and feel they are treated fairly. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and the lives and cultures of others.

The school monitors attendance well and has sound procedures for encouraging good attendance. These include ringing families on the first day of any absences and rewarding classes with the best punctuality and attendance.

School leaders establish and maintain a suitable safeguarding culture at the school. Staff know the pupils and their families well. There are appropriate arrangements to support pupils to learn how to stay safe, for instance when using the internet. Overall, the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher has established a strong culture of teamwork within the school. This is beginning to transform the life and work of the school. Together with leaders, teachers, and governors, she has brought the whole school community together to create a positive and happy environment for staff, pupils, and parents. A clear vision for the school has been created which is shared well with all stakeholders. This vision supports all members of the school community to develop a strong sense of belonging. They recognise how they all have a part to pay in supporting each other to ensure that pupils have a strong sense of well-being. The school has developed strong relationships with parents. They make valuable contributions and are fully involved in the life of the school and its community. Leaders and staff have a strong understanding of the needs of pupils within the school, in particular those with ALN.

The acting headteacher distributes roles and responsibilities well. Arrangements to support, develop and distribute leadership across school are developing appropriately. There are worthwhile opportunities for teachers to lead subject areas within the school. These valuable experiences are developing a sense of growing confidence in staff. As a result, many staff are keen to develop provision to improve experiences, progress, and outcomes for pupils. Although the school is at the beginning of its improvement journey, leaders feel empowered in their roles. They create beneficial plans for improvement and are beginning to reflect on how they support improvements in teaching and learning. For example, the recent focus on improving assessment for learning strategies across the school is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' ability to reflect accurately on their own learning.

Leaders plan appropriate professional learning for all staff that link suitably to the school development plan. Teachers and leaders have beneficial opportunities to work collaboratively with other Catholic schools in the area to support them in their roles. These links provide beneficial opportunities to share good practice and support improvements within the school. For example, the recent training to improve the Welsh language skills of support staff is beginning to have a positive impact across the school in supporting pupils in their Welsh lessons. However, the work to support teachers to develop a shared understanding of how to support pupils' progression in learning across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Leaders plan school improvement thoughtfully, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through conducting a range of self-evaluation and monitoring processes, such as considering the quality of pupils' work, lesson

observations and learning walks. There are valuable opportunities for all staff to contribute their ideas to these whole school evaluation and improvement processes.

Generally, however, plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on pupils' learning. For example, they do not identify well enough how teaching will provide suitable challenge for pupils to use their skills across the curriculum or how they will develop their independent learning skills.

Leaders have successfully improved provision for pupils with ALN. They ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have a secure understanding of their responsibilities and support them to undertake these effectively. However, the school's plans to develop the Welsh language do not focus clearly enough on how to support pupils to develop their Welsh speaking skills.

Teachers and leaders have taken a considered and thoughtful approach to the curriculum design process. They have considered the four purposes, areas of learning and experience and progression steps and are beginning to consider how guidance for early years pupils best supports them in their planning. Teachers are beginning to consider how they create authentic and engaging learning experiences within their planning. However, opportunities for pupils to have an input in what and how they learn are underdeveloped. In addition, they do not consider well enough how literacy, numeracy, Welsh and digital skills will be planned and delivered to ensure that all pupils make effective progress in these skills during their time at the school.

The governing body are strong advocates for the school and its community. Governors understand the school's current priorities and why they are important. They manage resources effectively. They allocate funding appropriately to support the school's current priorities and make best use of the pupil development grant to provide valuable support to pupils, which is having a positive effect on their well-being, social and emotional needs and supports them to make progress in their development and learning. They discharge their roles and responsibilities appropriately and meet regularly in various sub-committees and as a whole body to discuss and make decisions that support the running of the school. They work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

## 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.

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