



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

A report on

St Aidan's V.A.P. School

**Wiston
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA62 4PS**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About St Aidans V.A.P. School

Name of provider	St Aidan's V.A.P. School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales Voluntary Aided
Number of pupils on roll	69
Pupils of statutory school age	49
Number in nursery classes	13
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%)	11.0%
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%)	10.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	13/10/2014
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

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

Overview

St Aidan's Church in Wales VA School is a friendly and caring school, which promotes an inclusive ethos successfully. Pupils enjoy learning in a positive atmosphere, and they are enthusiastic during lessons and tasks. This is due to the strong working relationships that they have with their teachers and other staff. This promotes effective learning, a strong sense of well-being and good progress. As a result, pupils develop appropriate extended writing skills and their speaking, listening, reading, numeracy, and digital skills are good.

Pupils' outcomes are particularly successful where the teaching is consistent and stimulates pupils' learning. Additionally, pupils respond enthusiastically when they receive feedback that is purposeful and challenges them to perform at their best. However, where inconsistencies occur, the teaching and feedback do not help pupils improve their work effectively.

Staff demonstrate positive attitudes towards pupils, and they support and care for them diligently. This contributes to pupils' eagerness to learn and their resilience to persevere with tasks. Staff effectively encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour. Their emotional support for both pupils and their families is a strength of the school.

Overall, the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities. For example, staff and volunteers use the stimulating woodland area purposefully to engage pupils in outdoor learning. However, the indoor provision is not consistent and equitable for all younger pupils.

Leaders evaluate the school's work to plan for improvements sensibly. The headteacher provides effective and committed leadership and focuses on developing strengths within the school community to benefit pupils and their families. The senior leadership team, staff and governors share her caring vision. They work together well to ensure that the school is inclusive and that it promotes positive learning and well-being opportunities.

The headteacher uses the self-evaluation processes well to identify targets that will improve the school's practices. She supports the improvement strategies effectively by providing staff with purposeful opportunities to develop their expertise. This is facilitated well through well-planned professional learning and productive collaboration with local schools. This thoughtful approach to staff training is successful. It contributes to a positive whole-school ethos, where staff feel valued for their impact on pupils' outcomes and for their overall contributions to school life.

Recommendations

- R1 Provide better opportunities for pupils to improve the quality of their extended writing
- R2 Ensure that teaching is effective and consistent across the school
- R3 Ensure that teachers' feedback targets the next steps in pupils' learning effectively
- R4 Ensure that indoor learning experiences for younger pupils are resourced equitably across all classes

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

A minority of pupils enter the school with literacy, numeracy and social skills that are at or above the expected level for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils make effective progress from their starting points. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals make progress at least in line with their peers, and most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in their learning and achieve well.

Most pupils listen well to adults and each other. The youngest pupils' oracy skills are developing successfully, and, by Year 2, they speak confidently about their work and experiences. For example, pupils in the nursery class communicate purposefully with each other when planning and creating an Easter garden in the mud kitchen. Most older pupils develop effective oracy skills in English. They communicate sensibly and contribute enthusiastically to class discussions, expressing their views maturely. For example, Year 6 pupils explain their findings eloquently on life in Britain in the Swinging Sixties and the plight of refugees from around the World.

When speaking Welsh, many of the youngest pupils develop effective vocabulary and respond to commands and greetings well. By Year 2, many pupils use basic phrases confidently, for example to express their feelings or when discussing the weather. By Year 6, many pupils recall relevant vocabulary and sentence structures purposefully. As a result, many pupils develop successful Welsh oracy skills.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing well. Nursery and reception pupils show an interest in books and other reading materials, and they enjoy sharing and handling them as developing readers. Many Year 1 pupils become familiar with the relationship between letters and sounds quickly and they use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words confidently. By Year 2, they use their reading skills well, for example when reading story books, pamphlets and instructions. Many older pupils read intelligently in various contexts. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. They develop their advanced reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources. This includes finding relevant information on the legend of 'Cantre'r Gwaelod' and creating a timeline on the life of Martin Luther King.

Many pupils develop suitably as accomplished writers. By Year 2, many pupils use punctuation and grammar accurately and use adjectives and similes purposefully when describing pirates in battle. As pupils progress from Year 4 to Year 6, many write more independently in a wider range of genres. For example, Year 4 pupils write descriptively on the features of an unknown planet and the life of a soldier in the First World War. Many older pupils edit their work appropriately and use more sophisticated vocabulary and punctuation to improve their final drafts. However, pupils do not extend their writing effectively enough, to reflect their true abilities, when writing across the curriculum.

Many pupils apply their mathematical skills purposefully across the curriculum. For example, by Year 1, many pupils partition two-digit numbers well using bundles of

sticks and groups of eggs. Older pupils develop their numeracy skills successfully and use time zones systematically to manage travel arrangements between the northern and southern hemispheres. Many of them use a wide range of skills effectively, such as using survey results to manage a budget to sell ice cream at a sporting event. They also use line graphs intelligently to compare the lengths of shadows over the course of a day.

Most pupils have good digital skills, which they apply across the curriculum successfully. For example, many younger pupils program robots to travel around a course efficiently. Most older pupils manipulate text effectively, such as adapting and creating fact files. They prepare presentations confidently, for example, by creating and formatting persuasive posters for tourists on the importance of biodiversity at a local castle. Additionally, many pupils interrogate databases and spreadsheets effectively when comparing information about different astronauts.

Most pupils develop their artistic and creative skills well. This is particularly true of the youngest pupils, who create art and role-play in a wide variety of contexts. For example, reception class pupils co-operate well to weave patterns on wooden eggs and mark make with leaves on clay in the outdoor area. Across the school, most pupils embrace the opportunities to experiment freely to develop their creativity. This includes Year 6 pupils using water colours and pastels independently to emulate the artwork of famous Welsh and international artists.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The professional relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. This enables most pupils to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals. Nearly all pupils show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and caring environment. They feel that adults in the school listen to their views sensitively and take them into account when considering decisions that impinge upon their lives.

Nearly all pupils are courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors. They behave well in class and around the school. Nearly all pupils show care for each other and respect the contributions of other pupils. For example, during outdoor learning, younger pupils show high levels of consideration and kindness when they share items of equipment willingly amongst each other. Additionally, they work together effectively to follow instructions to plant seeds in pots and growing trays. As they move through school, nearly all pupils show respect for the opinions of others, such as when they discuss and debate the importance of biodiversity and the need to preserve the natural world.

Most pupils develop well as capable and aspirational learners. They have positive attitudes to learning, show interest in their work and talk confidently and enthusiastically about school life. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They collaborate very successfully in pairs and in groups, and most make worthwhile contributions to class discussions. As a result, they demonstrate a high level of respect for the contributions of others.

Most pupils draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being effectively. For example, both younger and older pupils explain sensibly how to resolve challenging

individual tasks by using different methods purposefully, which help them when their work gets difficult. Nearly all pupils appreciate the timetabled access that they have to the 'Rainbow Room' for individual and group work, which supports their well-being and emotional needs successfully.

Most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of children's rights. For example, during presentations in assemblies, members of the pupil voice groups emphasise clearly that their rights should be heard. Nearly all pupils show a strong awareness of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society and they develop effectively as ethical and well-informed citizens. They are fair and caring in their interactions with others, such as when pupils on the 'Change Makers Council' support the school in arranging fund raising events for health-related charities. Additionally, nearly all pupils are confident in discussing the importance of fair trade to support ethical farming and the planting and harvesting of crops around the world.

Nearly all pupils participate willingly and express purposeful opinions when offering ideas about the school's curriculum. The inclusive pupil voice groups allow pupils to take an active part in school life and their representatives demonstrate a range of leadership skills, such as keeping safe and interacting with younger pupils. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and representatives are proud of their valuable contributions and achievements. This includes the Criw Cymraeg who lead whole-school assemblies on matters that are important to them, such as developing the use of Welsh around the school.

Nearly all pupils embrace their learning experiences enthusiastically on school trips, such as foraging in woodland areas and developing their expressive arts at a local theatre. Nearly all pupils develop their entrepreneurial and creative skills well. For example, younger pupils, bake biscuits and sell them to raise money to adopt a tiger, following a visit to a nearby zoo to learn about endangered animals.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily. They understand the benefit of physical exercise on their health, such as participating in termly well-being days with a focus on eating healthily, exercise and mindfulness. As a result, most pupils have a secure knowledge of the importance of good physical and emotional well-being. Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to use the internet sensibly. For example, they remind each other robustly that they should not share their passwords with others.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that aligns effectively to the vision and principles of the Curriculum for Wales and the school's Christian ethos. The planned activities engage most pupils well and teachers motivate pupils to persevere and succeed in their learning. Teachers and support staff collaborate well to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of all pupils successfully. Most of the learning environment is stimulating, including vibrant outdoor areas, which promote the development of many pupils' skills in exciting and purposeful ways.

Overall, teachers ensure that pupils access a diverse range of experiences to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. This includes planning valuable activities to support pupils' interests. For example, on a

school visit to investigate environmental issues, teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to study factors that affect the eco system detrimentally.

The planning to develop pupils' skills is sound. As a result, most pupils make effective progress in their speaking, listening and reading skills. For example, younger pupils successfully read a pictorial and simple recipe when baking biscuits. Older pupils read their own chosen texts with enthusiasm, describing the plot, characters and style of the author, whilst persuading fellow pupils to read aloud with conviction.

Teachers provide an engaging range of writing activities. For example, they encourage pupils to describe the appearance of Shakespearean characters, such as Lady Macbeth. However, the provision for pupils to edit and improve their own written work across the curriculum is underdeveloped and it does not encourage pupils to reflect their true writing abilities well enough.

The planning to develop pupils' numeracy and digital skills leads to purposeful tasks that develop pupils' skills in real-life situations. For example, younger pupils sort and order Easter chicks carefully in the creative area and older pupils make films on the features of different seasons independently. This thoughtful planning of experiences has a positive effect on pupils' values and attitudes to learning.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. A strong commitment by staff to promote the speaking of Welsh ensures that pupils converse confidently in Welsh and discuss Welsh folk tales with excitement. Additionally, the school uses a Welsh version, when using sign language, which supports the school's inclusive practices effectively.

Most of the teaching is effective. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and communicate clear objectives to promote effective learning amongst pupils. On the whole, teachers explain the purpose of tasks clearly. Generally, the pace of lessons engages pupils' interests well and motivates them to learn to the best of their abilities. However, this is inconsistent and there are times when pupils lose interest in their work.

Where teaching is effective, teachers plan inspirational activities that develop pupils' curiosity successfully. They use imaginative teaching methods to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. For example, teachers encourage younger pupils to explore the outdoors with confidence, identifying them as 'explorers'. Teachers also challenge older pupils to work collaboratively to develop their story maps into dynamic mini dramas and to build bug hotels with partners.

The working relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Staff promote high expectations of behaviour and participation. They provide safe environments in which pupils are happy and confident to attempt new experiences. As a result, most teaching impacts beneficially on many pupils' learning. Staff know pupils well, including pupils identified as needing additional support. Support staff expertly employ a range of strategies to guide pupils in their learning. They know when to intervene and when to allow pupils to persevere independently, which encourages resilience and diligence.

The teaching of personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their well-being successfully. Staff promote the benefits of healthy eating and drinking and exercise purposefully. They encourage pupils to consider the impact that such practices have on their long-term health.

Most teachers provide verbal feedback during lessons, which encourages pupils to remain on task and focus on improving aspects of their work. The quality of teachers' written feedback is inconsistent. Where it is effective, pupils are clear about what they need to do and how to improve their work. However, too often, it does not support pupils to identify the next steps in their learning well enough. School reports to parents provide detailed information about their child's progress and their attitudes to learning, and include targets for improvement.

Care, support and guidance

The school is an inclusive and caring community, and staff encourage pupils to contribute to its warm and friendly ethos successfully. The purposeful professional relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a positive feature of the school. For example, older pupils read stories to younger pupils and converse with them in Welsh during pre-arranged social activities.

Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and they respond promptly and effectively to their emotional and social needs. This supportive provision helps most pupils to settle well at school. The school's sincere and collaborative approach contributes well to pupils' happiness. This includes the beneficial use of the 'Rainbow Room' and the beneficial work of the school's family engagement officer.

Provision for pupils identified as having ALN is effective. The ALN co-ordinator works conscientiously with other staff members and external partners, to ensure that there is good identification, tracking and support for individuals and groups of pupils from an early age. Pupil progress reviews result in staff members having a clear understanding of the needs of pupils. Staff interact beneficially with a range of services to secure additional, timely resources and to offer specialist support to pupils with a range of learning, emotional and social needs. These arrangements ensure that most pupils, who benefit from additional support, make good progress in relation to their stage of development.

The school develops effective opportunities for pupils to participate in making decisions to improve their experiences in school. Staff encourage all pupils to take on leadership roles effectively on a variety of elected groups. This provision broadens their understanding of the importance of becoming active citizens and the importance of individuals' contributions to support and sustain a purposeful society. For example, members of the school council lead assemblies to explain the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The 'Change Makers' also evaluate the day-to-day practices of the school thoughtfully, such as conserving energy and recycling correctly in allocated bins.

The school has a beneficial range of opportunities that help pupils to develop a good understanding of their Welsh heritage. For example, the school promotes their 'cynefin' effectively, through each class studying different aspects of rural life, Welsh artists and aspects of the Pembrokeshire landscape. These include local places of

interest, such as nearby castles and landmarks along the coastline. The school promotes Welsh culture effectively, for example through participating in the local Eisteddfod and through its Saint David's Day celebrations. This provision encourages pupils to engage enthusiastically with the culture of Wales and to feel proud of the school's inclusive ethos within its Welsh community.

Staff place a strong emphasis on providing a varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. For example, younger pupils learn about the world of work effectively. This includes opportunities for them to study how bees produce honey and how co-operation amongst workers is essential to the process. Additionally, pupils visit a nearby wildlife park to enhance their knowledge on different animals and to study their habitats and life cycles.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their community. They use the experiences positively so that pupils develop respect and understand that caring for others is important. As a result, pupils learn that acts of kindness make a difference to the lives of families within their locality. The school uses collective worship successfully to promote pupils' spiritual development. For example, pupils support a local food bank through collecting donations in their harvest festival celebrations. These activities contribute well to pupils' understanding that supporting each other is important in a caring society.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance are efficient and are beginning to improve attendance and punctuality of a few pupils. Staff communicate well with each other to support pupils. This includes understanding their roles in keeping pupils safe and maintaining the school's strong inclusive ethos. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher works diligently with the senior leadership team, staff, pupils, parents and members of the community. Together, they have developed a shared vision that has a strong emphasis on improving pupils' well-being. This collaborative approach is successful and reflects the school's motto, 'Believe and Achieve', effectively.

The headteacher leads the school conscientiously and ensures that staff focus directly on creating and promoting a nurturing and inclusive environment, where all pupils and adults feel valued. She encourages staff to model behaviours and values that are based directly on the school's Christian ethos, which aim to benefit the school community and the lives of its pupils. This includes promoting care, respect, kindness and spirituality as integral features of school life. As a result, relationships throughout the school are positive and there is a clear commitment amongst staff to improve the school's provision and pupils' outcomes.

Leaders ensure that teachers and support staff have clear roles and delegated responsibilities that contribute well to improving the school's practices. For example, they work in professional learning groups successfully, both within the school and with other local schools, to develop a shared understanding of how to plan an effective curriculum. As a result, arrangements to promote professional development

for all staff link well with the school's priorities for improvement. Leaders also tailor strategies well to evaluate pupils' learning and well-being in line with the school's targets, such as developing pupils' oracy and social skills through effective staff training.

Leaders have established a range of sensible monitoring activities to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. They gather a broad range of first-hand evidence to inform their views of the school. For example, they consider the views of pupils and parents effectively, and analyse information on how well the pupils are progressing accurately. The school uses the findings from the self-evaluation processes to inform the school's development priorities accurately. This includes addressing areas for improvement successfully, such as improving pupils' numeracy and reasoning skills.

Leaders and staff develop pupils' use of most of the school grounds creatively, particularly for the younger pupils. They have increased outdoor facilities purposefully, which has allowed pupils more opportunities to choose where and how they learn. For example, pupils from nursery to Year 3 learn to dress appropriately for learning first-hand about building, cooking and gardening in the school's outdoor kitchen, construction and growing areas. However, the indoor provision within the areas of learning for these pupils is not equitable across all classes. They are not resourced effectively in every class to promote beneficial and equal opportunities for all pupils to learn through a broad range of experiences.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities successfully, for example in areas such as financial management and self-evaluation processes. They are proactive in updating their own knowledge of national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales and ALN reform. They also act promptly on concerns relating to the impact of poverty on the lives of parents and pupils within their own community. Governors are assigned to areas of responsibility that are in line with their levels of expertise and hold the school to account sensibly against an agreed set of criteria. For example, they recognise the school's progress over recent years and support the priorities to develop greater consistency in teaching across the school.

Governors have an accurate and detailed picture of the school gained through participating in activities such as listening to pupils and regular discussions and informative reports from the headteacher. They liaise closely with staff to ensure that there are suitable procedures to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. As a result, governors contribute a constructive and well-placed voice in moving the school forward.

The school keeps parents are well informed of developments, for example through the use of social media, the school app and the presence of staff at drop-off and pick-up times. Parents feel that the school is a safe and caring family environment. They appreciate how quickly leaders and staff respond to any concerns that they raise, and this is a significant strength of the school.

Leaders manage the budget effectively and allocate resources to meet the school's needs well. This includes the pupil development grant, which the school uses effectively to support pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals.

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)

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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