



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

A report on

Spittal V.C.P. School

**Spittal
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA62 5QR**

Date of inspection: July 2023

by

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

About Spittal V.C.P. School

Name of provider	Spittal V.C.P. School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled
Number of pupils on roll	108
Pupils of statutory school age	80
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%)	12.6%
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%)	15.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2015
Start date of inspection	03/07/2023

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

Spittal Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a caring school, which encourages pupils to be happy and enjoy school, whilst learning in a warm and inclusive environment. Pupils participate enthusiastically in school life and engage willingly in lessons, demonstrating an eagerness to learn and succeed. This is due to the purposeful working relationships that exist with their teachers and other staff.

Where learning is particularly successful the teaching is engaging, vibrant, promotes positivity and staff have high expectations of pupils. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent, and the impact of assessment practices and the use of numeracy skills varies between classes.

Staff provide strong support, care and guidance for pupils in all aspects of school life. This encourages pupils to focus well on their individual learning and well-being. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are motivated to develop a good range of skills and positive attitudes to learning. As a result, they develop purposeful literacy, digital and creative skills, and their Welsh oracy skills are satisfactory.

Staff use areas of the extensive school grounds and their local area effectively to promote a bespoke curriculum purposefully. However, the provision of learning experiences in the outdoors for younger pupils is underdeveloped.

The headteacher leads the school with the pupils' care and well-being at the heart of her vision. The senior teacher, the current staff and the governors share her nurturing philosophy.

Leaders evaluate the school's work thoroughly, using well-planned self-evaluation processes, which lead to effective development plans. Arrangements to distribute leadership roles and responsibilities are not as well-structured, which hampers the pace of school improvement. The school's monitoring practices lead to relevant training opportunities for staff to develop their skills through agreed and purposeful professional learning courses.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the site safety issue, identified at the time of inspection
- R2 Delegate leadership roles and responsibilities effectively to support the pace of school improvement
- R3 Ensure that the quality of teaching and assessment practices are effective and consistent across the school
- R4 Improve the resources and provision of learning experiences in the outdoors for younger pupils

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils have literacy, numeracy and social skills that are at or above those expected for their age. During their overall time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress and achieve well.

Most pupils listen attentively, speak clearly and express their ideas sensibly. Younger pupils discuss their work with adults and their peers enthusiastically, such as when they compare and describe the different heights of lighthouses. Most older pupils communicate clearly in English and they offer answers and opinions maturely. For example, in Year 6, most pupils discuss confidently the advantages and disadvantages of the bull run in Pamplona.

The reading skills of most pupils are developing well. By the time pupils are seven years old, many read fluently and accurately, and decode unfamiliar words correctly. The oldest pupils in the school read complex texts with good understanding. They are confident readers, and they search for information from various texts and appropriate websites purposefully to enrich their work across the curriculum. For example, they research the origins of Stonehenge and its possible links to the Preseli Mountains.

Most younger pupils develop fine motor skills effectively, such as when they paint seascapes carefully with brushes. They progress quickly from mark making in the youngest classes to forming letters, words and sentences by the time they move into Year 1. The majority also spell correctly and punctuate carefully during their time in the Year 1 and 2 class. As a result, by the end of Year 2, many pupils make good progress and use varied vocabulary and language patterns to write stories and poems. For example, they write descriptive and fictional tales on the adventures of a fish.

Pupils' writing skills are generally good across the school. Most older pupils write effectively in a range of contexts and in extended forms. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they arrange their work correctly and show a firm understanding of sentence structure and punctuation. They create imaginative pieces in different genres, write persuasive letters correctly and use alliteration, personification and metaphors well to improve their work. For example, in the Year 5 and 6 class pupils produce both fictional and instructional texts for younger pupils, to inform and advise them on the dangers and hazards of local beaches.

The progress that most pupils make in developing their Welsh oracy skills as they travel through the school is appropriate. Most pupils use suitable phrases regularly in everyday situations and they answer questions with satisfactory responses during discussions with teachers and each other.

By Year 2, many pupils understand and follow mathematical principles effectively. They use numbers confidently, collect information and record their results in simple tables and charts. Many have a good understanding of the properties of different shapes and an effective example of this is when pupils create their own shapes outdoors with sticks. They measure the length of daffodils accurately with a range of measuring equipment and experiment with capacity when using jugs at the water area. Many pupils use their mathematical skills well in authentic tasks, such as following a set of ingredients to bake cup-cakes for a wedding.

Many of the older pupils demonstrate sound mathematical skills, and the more able pupils develop sophisticated strategies to resolve problems, such as using co-ordinates in four quadrants confidently. They analyse data accurately and present it purposefully in various forms. For example, many pupils compare flight times and distances travelled on charts and graphs effectively. However, although many pupils have an effective understanding of mathematical concepts, the application of these numeracy skills is inconsistent across the school in their work across the curriculum.

Most pupils have good digital skills. Younger pupils use camera functions to create computer-based designs efficiently. For example, they draw animals and use an interactive board proficiently to create a pictogram on their favourite sandwiches. By the end of their time at school, most pupils create multimedia presentations and manipulate texts effectively when scripting and filming animations about plastic pollution in the seas. Most pupils create databases and spreadsheets confidently and interrogate data proficiently, such as details about festivals from different cultures.

Most pupils develop imaginative artistic skills. For example, older pupils perform the roles of different Shakespearean characters confidently, such as Caliban and Prospero. In addition, most pupils develop their creative skills purposefully. This includes designing and making a three-dimensional seahorse sculpture and interpreting the work of famous Welsh artists in their own artwork.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud members of their school community. They are happy to come to school where they show kindness and respect to one another, staff and visitors.

Nearly all pupils feel safe at the school and believe that staff treat them equally. They know that there are adults who will listen to any concerns they may have, and they are confident that these adults will respond swiftly and appropriately. They play together enthusiastically, take turns and support each other effectively while playing games and socialising during break times. Nearly all pupils respect the efforts and contribution of others in class, for example by listening to their peers and responding to their thoughts and ideas with interest.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is impeccable. They walk calmly around the school and welcome visitors in a polite and courteous

manner, for example holding doors open for each other and adults. Nearly all pupils are well aware of the school expectations and 'Ready, Respect and Safe' is a clear rule within the school, which is grasped and adhered to by pupils and staff. As a result, pupils have a very clear understanding of the school's rules and explain well as to why they are important and what happens if they do not maintain them.

In class, most pupils arrive ready to learn, they engage enthusiastically in tasks and are eager to do well. As a result, most pupils develop effective learning behaviours and positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils readily support each other if they find a task difficult. They also clearly understand and apply embedded learning strategies across the school to find help when needed, or example, when using peer support to support their learning. They recognise the importance of perseverance and how this level of determination will help them succeed. Older pupils in particular regularly respond effectively to teacher feedback and understand both how to, and the importance improving their work. This enables them to make good progress, particularly in developing their literacy and extended writing skills.

Nearly all pupils, across the school, understand their place within the local community and they eagerly share what they have learnt about local history and the local environment. Older pupils relish the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial skills when building model cottages linked to the Rebecca Riots, as part of their Pembrokeshire history theme and selling these to parents. They accurately apply their mathematical skills to calculate how much to sell their cottages for to make a profit and to avoid any losses.

Most pupils demonstrate a broad understanding of cultural diversity, such as through their study of Judaism and the Hindu faith. This leads to showing respect for the beliefs of others and an understanding that society is multi-cultural. They also show care and concern about global issues such as the pollution in the oceans and the overuse of plastic in everyday life. As a result, most pupils develop well as ethical and well-informed citizens. Such positive attitudes increase the pupils' awareness of the importance of their actions towards creating a caring and tolerant society.

Pupils have suitable leadership opportunities, including membership of the Eco Council, School Council and Church Champions. They take these responsibilities seriously and are proud of their roles. These pupils believe they are listened to by adults and can impact the life of the school, such as by promoting recycling and supporting the building of a school in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Most pupils understand the need to make healthy food choices and to exercise regularly, which includes participating in daily mile activities. Most older pupils understand how to stay safe online and the dangers of sharing personal information with others.

Teaching and learning experiences

The working relationship between staff and pupils is strong. On the whole, teachers know their pupils well, respect their opinions and encourage them to learn effectively. Most teachers encourage pupils to contribute suggestions sensibly when planning topics. They use these views well as part of pupils' learning experiences. The school

provides an inclusive curriculum that aims to motivate pupils to explore their own ideas and to articulate their thoughts confidently.

Most teachers plan a variety of engaging experiences, in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales, which motivates most pupils to make good progress from their starting points. This demonstrates a commitment to celebrating Welsh heritage and culture well and teachers provide stimulating activities that promote pupils' interest in their immediate locality. It involves working with a Welsh graffiti artist to design a local bus shelter and visiting a nearby manor house to explore the sounds and experiences of the woods. Additionally, pupils celebrate St David's Day and express their feelings creatively through their own line drawings, whilst appreciating the music of famous Welsh composers.

Many teachers and support staff plan effectively to improve pupils' literacy, creative and digital skills. For example, innovative teaching in Years 5 and 6 provides pupils with stimulating opportunities to write explanations and five-part stories as part of their 'Ar Lan Y Môr' project. Younger pupils collaborate well and talk positively about having their ideas integrated into tasks, such as creating an underwater collage with shapes and paints. However, the planning for the progression of numeracy skills and Welsh oracy skills, as pupils move through the school, is not as secure.

Provision for pupils' personal and social education develops their understanding of their own well-being and that of others successfully. The curriculum gives good consideration to international events and the diversity of the world. For example, pupils discuss sensibly the impact of war on Ukraine and how different races celebrate festivals, such as Día de los Muertos, the Mexican festival of the Day of the Dead.

Where teaching is good or better, staff focus effectively on improving pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. This supports most pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. In a few instances where teaching is particularly strong, pupils produce outstanding work. Additionally, teaching assistants provide pupils with beneficial support and know when to intervene and when to allow them to work independently.

The lively pace of many lessons engages pupils' interests well and motivates them to persevere and succeed. Staff have good subject knowledge and share clear learning objectives purposefully with pupils. The best lessons engage pupils purposefully and motivate them to learn in a thriving and productive learning environment. As a result, pupils attempt tasks confidently, such as older pupils conducting scientific experiments on combustible materials. As a result, most lessons are effective. However, the quality of teaching in a few lessons is inconsistent across the school, which results in lessons that lack sufficient impact on pupils' learning.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and suggest improvements to their work. However, the quality of teachers' feedback is variable, and it does not always support pupils well enough to improve their work. For example, where it is less effective, teachers repeat the same feedback often, without the intended impact on the pupils' next pieces of work. In the most effective practice, teachers share skilful feedback both orally and in writing to assess the quality of

pupils' learning and target any needs promptly. At the end of the year, parents and carers receive suitable annual reports on their child's progress.

Teachers plan well for pupils to investigate possible future career paths and the world of work. For example, older pupils explore the work of lifeboat crews and the importance of the emergency services in their locality. Additionally, the provision to develop healthy eating, positive mindsets and physical health is effective. For example, teachers use the expertise of military veterans to facilitate regular and beneficial fitness programmes for pupils.

The school provides a vibrant and interesting learning environment indoors where all areas are used purposefully to support pupils' learning. Staff use the outdoor areas that are available well, such as the woodland area. However, there is a lack of stimulating outdoor provision, to promote pupils' skills' development, available for pupils up to Year 2.

Care, support and guidance

The school places a high priority on the well-being and happiness of its pupils. Staff and pupils work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In addition, there is an emphasis on pupils learning about important values such as kindness. This supportive ethos helps pupils feel safe and contributes to their pride in their school and to their well-being.

Understanding the heritage and culture of Wales underpins the developing curriculum. Pupils visit local beaches, learn about famous Welsh people and historic events in depth. For example, in the Year 3 and 4 class, pupils complete artwork in the style of well-known and contemporary Welsh artists. Additionally, the school gives pupils the opportunity to participate in the art competitions of the National Eisteddfod, as well as performing and singing in public performances. For example, teachers guide the older pupils well in their preparations for the forthcoming school production of 'The Tempest'.

One of the school's strengths is its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school ensures that pupils develop a purposeful understanding of the traditions and customs of other cultures and faiths. For example, teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to study Judaism and Hinduism, in addition to developing their knowledge and understanding of Christian values. The values of kindness, generosity and care underpin this philosophy and support a culture of well-being, where pupils aspire to become valuable citizens that contribute enthusiastically to school and community life.

The teachers ensure that pupils benefit from educational visits to a range of local places to support their learning. These include visits to nearby manor houses, churches, theatres and also beaches, where they explore the terrain and surf and coasteer in the sea. In addition, there are useful visits to the school by the community police officer, focusing on how to stay safe, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute officers, who educate pupils about water safety. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to expand their interests and experiences through extra-curricular clubs, both after school and during lunchtimes.

The school has appropriate arrangements to support pupils to learn about the importance of healthy eating and drinking and on-line safety. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to benefit from physical exercise, during the school day, including 'wake and shake' sessions in nursery and reception. These help pupils to improve their understanding of how to stay fit and remain healthy.

The school provides pupils with suitable opportunities to hold leadership roles as part of one of the school's council groups, as a member of the 'Cryw Cymraeg' or as a school ambassador. Governors support these groups and provide pupils with suitable opportunities to make decisions about how to improve their school. These roles support pupils in the development of their self-confidence and leadership skills beneficially.

Provision for pupils identified as having ALN is suitable. The ALN co-ordinator works well with external partners, to ensure that there is effective identification, tracking and support for individuals. Staff members have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils, including developing useful one-page profiles that are monitored well in class. These arrangements ensure that most pupils, who benefit from additional support, make suitable progress towards their learning goals.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance are suitable and the impact of the school's initiatives is beginning to improve attendance and punctuality. Staff communicate well with each other to support pupils. They understand the importance of their roles in keeping pupils safe once they arrive in school and during the school day. 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 places great emphasis on ensuring that pupils feel happy and that they enjoy their time at school. She places the care and well-being of pupils at the heart of her vision. Staff take pride in the school's values and caring ethos and the current staff support the implementation of this vision wholeheartedly. This purposeful mindset by the leaders and staff create an atmosphere of positivity and co-operation. This has a beneficial effect on pupils' attitudes to learning and their support of each other.

Leaders hold staff to account for the quality and impact of their work and they act upon concerns when necessary. Leaders attempt to create consistency in the school's processes to ensure that all staff focus on providing agreed practices for the benefit of pupils. This includes a readiness to embed a common understanding of professional values among staff, which is establishing itself well with the current staff.

Leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a clear link between self-evaluation activities and improvement planning. As a result, leaders prioritise their findings effectively and set appropriate targets to move the school forward, such as improving pupils' numeracy skills. However, arrangements to distribute leadership roles and responsibilities, to reduce workload on specific individuals, are not effective and hamper the pace of school improvement.

Leaders' processes to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Quality improvement systems include discussions with pupils about their work and well-being and monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Leaders gather the views of other partners effectively, consider the views of parents and act sensibly on any findings. For example, the school has adapted breakfast club provision sensibly in response to parental feedback.

Leaders ensure that relevant training opportunities are available to staff to support their professional development. These link well with the school's priorities for improvement and support staff to develop skills that they use effectively to improve pupils' outcomes. For example, leaders organise effective training for staff to develop pupils' communication and emotional skills. Leaders also share the school's culture of safeguarding with all staff purposefully.

The school visits other local schools to share effective practices and this supports school improvement beneficially. As a result, staff are provided with productive opportunities that develop their professional knowledge. For example, staff work effectively with a network of local schools to develop the expectations related to curriculum reform.

Leaders ensure that staff make good use of the building and allow pupils to use support areas, such as the library and outdoor classroom, effectively. The school uses its expansive outdoor areas appropriately, such as a woodland and its wild area. However, there is a lack of regular outdoor provision and learning experiences for pupils up to Year 2. Resources for these pupils in the outdoor area do not enrich their experiences successfully enough to enhance their skills further.

Leaders allocate resources effectively and use the pupil development grant sensibly to provide support programmes, purchase equipment and fund residential visits. They are beginning to address national priorities such as implementing the Curriculum for Wales well. For example, teachers use the local community as a stimulus for learning, such as Jemima Nicholas' exploits in thwarting the French invasion of Pembrokeshire.

The input of governors, through sub-committees and the full governing body, creates positive improvements across the school. The governors are supportive of the school and hold the senior leadership team to account as critical friends. The headteacher and senior teacher inform governors accurately about pupils' learning and they consider how to improve provision thoughtfully. This includes funding wordless books to develop storytelling and outdoor clothing.

Governors promote effective practices to ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and leaders advise parents on the importance of nutritious food in their lunchboxes. Governors monitor the budget regularly and ensure that decisions on expenditure align with the school's priorities for improvement, such as developing adult support within the classroom for pupils with additional needs.

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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