



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

A report on

Ely Presbyterian Church School

**4-6 Archer Road
Cardiff
CF5 4FR**

Date of inspection: September 2023

by

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

About Ely Presbyterian Church School

Name of provider	Ely Presbyterian Church School
Proprietor	Mrs Julia Haines
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent coeducational school
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	16
Pupils of statutory school age	16
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2016
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023

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

Ely Presbyterian Church School is a nurturing Christian environment whose pupils embody the values of kindness, honesty, respect and responsibility highly successfully. It is a strong community, which unites pupils, parents and staff. Pupils learn the importance of charity and make a positive contribution to their local community through practical and fund raising activities.

Nearly all pupils at the school are confident, articulate and comfortable speaking with staff about any worries they may have. Most pupils are intrinsically motivated and considerate of others, and show great pride in belonging to their school. Pupils make at least suitable progress in their skill development and level of understanding as they progress through the school and nearly all pupils' oracy skills are particularly well developed.

All staff know the pupils extremely well. Teachers create an environment where every pupil feels safe and secure, and they establish calm classroom routines where pupils can learn. Where teaching is most effective, teachers promote learning through a range of interesting activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities. However, in a minority of lessons activities do not always support pupils to maximise their progress.

Leaders are compassionate and caring and their management of the school is effective. They are ambitious for all pupils, have high expectations of their staff and promote the school's Christian vision with conviction. There is a strong sense of staff unity and everyone at the school works together in the pupils' best interests. Leaders strive to improve their school. However, their activities do not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching upon learning.

Ely Presbyterian Church School meets all the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, needed to maintain registration.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on improving the quality of teaching
- R2 Build on effective practice to ensure that teaching, both its planning and delivery, is consistently well matched to pupils' abilities in all classes

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Learning

Across the school, most pupils have highly developed communication skills. Pupils express themselves clearly from an early age and talk enthusiastically about their work. Nearly all pupils are confident, articulate, and at ease discussing their work with their peers, teacher and visitors. Many pupils speak with clarity, using correct grammar, and they appropriately adapt their language to the audience. They ask thoughtful questions based on what they have heard and make effective contributions that take other pupils' views into account. Older pupils understand the need to compromise when working in a group and discuss their roles within a team maturely. They moderate their tone, expression and language appropriately depending on the audience and construct conversations well.

Younger pupils build good phonic knowledge and apply this in their reading effectively. They can decode unfamiliar words successfully and answer straightforward comprehension questions accurately. As pupils' reading skills progress, they read well to analyse, interpret and evaluate literature across a variety of different contexts. Older pupils are confident readers with a good grasp of a wide range of genres. They use a broad vocabulary, think maturely about what they have read and make thoughtful inferences and deductions.

Younger pupils develop their early writing skills quickly and use a range of sentence structures effectively to make their writing interesting. They have a secure knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar and develop a broad and rich vocabulary. Older pupils demonstrate understanding of subjects through their writing in lessons and, over time, write for a variety of purposes suitably.

Most pupils develop a suitable range of numeracy skills, and across the school, a few pupils' mathematical skills are more advanced. Most younger pupils have a secure understanding of place value and use a range of number skills successfully when working with digital and analogue time. Older pupils work without a calculator confidently when calculating the areas of compound shapes including circles and can succinctly explain their thought processes when translating trigonometric graphs. When given suitable opportunities, pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum successfully, for example in science when considering the shape, mass and density of different materials. Pupils also confidently use correct scientific units and vocabulary when explaining their answers.

Across the school, most pupils' thinking skills develop soundly. They consider questions carefully and engage maturely with adults and peers to discuss their views. For example, all pupils reflect upon the theme discussed in collective worship and consider how they can apply this to their everyday life.

Most pupils build a suitable range of creative skills as they move through the school, and they use them in a range of activities across the curriculum. For example, younger pupils use their imagination to role-play, create music and make fruits and vegetables out of clay. All pupils perform enthusiastically in the end of term concert.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing well. Younger pupils practise their skills through a range of purposeful activities. For example, they develop their fine motor skills when cutting and gross motor skills when using their hands to make the shapes of animals. Older pupils build on these skills appropriately through varied opportunities to explore a range of activities, particularly as part of the PE curriculum and during playtimes.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and many develop their digital skills appropriately as they move through the school. Younger pupils, through the newly implemented digital skills curriculum, are beginning to develop a range of skills, including use of formulae within spreadsheets, databases and basic aspects of coding. Older pupils use a range of software to support their learning, for example spreadsheets and presentation programs.

Throughout the school most pupils' organisational skills are particularly well developed and mature. This includes managing their time effectively, gathering their own learning resources and keeping their working area tidy and uncluttered.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils display a sense of great pride in belonging to their school. They are confident meeting visitors, embody the school's Christian ethos and are excellent ambassadors for the school. As they move through the school pupils develop as confident, mature and responsible young people.

Nearly all pupils feel part of a happy and close-knit school community where they feel safe and cared for. Pupils display trust in their teachers shown through productive working relationships and contribute to creating a warm and friendly atmosphere in class. Nearly all pupils are confident to speak to their teachers if something is worrying them. This means that pupils are comforted in knowing that they will receive thoughtful assistance should they need it.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour in lessons and break times, displaying kindness and respect to all members of the school community. Older pupils socialise and mix well with younger pupils, which creates a strong sense of belonging and community. Nearly all pupils show regard for the thoughts and feelings of others in the way they take turns, listen attentively and contribute successfully to discussions. They move seamlessly between different activities and settle promptly to their work in a calm and purposeful way. Many pupils appreciate the support and learning opportunities the school provides.

Most pupils are motivated to achieve personal and academic targets set for them by teachers and respect the behaviour system ensuring classrooms are effective learning environments. Nearly all pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary, sustaining concentration and enthusiastic engagement throughout lessons. For example, pupils eagerly shared how they were able to use a formula learned in a maths lesson to find the surface area of a cell in their science topic. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and respond positively to teacher feedback.

Pupils enjoy being part of a 'house', which creates a further sense of belonging and is an important part of the way each pupil builds and sustains high levels of well-being. Nearly all pupils understand and can explain how to earn house points and appreciate being recognised for their positive contributions. For example, in a weekly team meeting chaired astutely by the house captains, pupils describe the wide range of positive behaviours that result in points being awarded.

When given opportunities to use their voice to influence school life, nearly all pupils take this opportunity seriously. For example, they use the school suggestion box to request football goals to engage in physical activity during break times and are pleased that school leaders acted upon their request to enhance their school experience.

Most pupils demonstrate a suitable level of independence in their work. When they are given an opportunity to do so, many pupils work well in groups interacting with each other appropriately. In a music lesson primary pupils sensitively help and

correct each other's Indian hand movements. They teach each other effectively and accept help from others readily.

Nearly all pupils develop their understanding of healthy living by taking part in a range of sports activities within PE lessons. Most older pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle. Nearly all pupils relish the opportunity to go on off-site trips that are linked to their learning in the classroom. Younger pupils speak enthusiastically about visiting Cardiff Castle as part of their history topic.

Pupils across the school are eager to undertake fundraising initiatives that support charitable organisations and activities to help their local community. These involve weekly litter picks by the 'presbyterian pickers' as well as coffee mornings and non-uniform days.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school curriculum is heavily underpinned by Christian principles and the school clearly states one of its aims is 'to create a truly Christian context in which and through which children may learn and develop'.

In the primary and lower secondary phases, the curriculum offers pupils the experience of all areas of learning specified in the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. In the upper secondary school, pupils are offered a narrow range of GCSE subjects, focusing on English, mathematics, science, humanities and French. The school uses local facilities extremely well to provide pupils with a wide variety of experiences for their PE lessons, including basketball, Tae Kwon Do and paddle sport.

Teachers supplement the taught curriculum with a range of interesting learning experiences. Pupils visit local castles to support their work in history and develop a knowledge of public services, for example through visits by the fire service and police. In addition, the school helps pupils develop an understanding of their place in the local community. For example, pupils have a strong relationship with residents at a local residential home, including participating in joint singing and craft sessions and exchanging letters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The school's personal and social education programme reflects the aims and ethos of the school. Through the curriculum, pupils are helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example in relation to healthy eating and online safety.

Whilst lessons are taught by suitably qualified staff, due to staffing levels teachers are often deployed outside of their subject or phase specialism. This does impact the quality of teaching.

In nearly all lessons, teachers create a secure, calm learning environment with well-established routines. Teachers have strong professional relationships with their pupils and are effective language role models.

In the majority of lessons, where teaching is most effective, teachers have secure subject knowledge. In these lessons, teachers plan interesting learning activities suited to the ability of individual pupils within the class. In addition, they use

questioning skilfully to probe and extend understanding. As a result, pupils make strong progress.

In a minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers are less secure in the subject matter they are teaching. Activities in these lessons are not always tailored to meet the ability of individual pupils. Also, teachers are sometimes unable to adapt swiftly to the learning needs of pupils as the lesson develops. As a result, in these lessons, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.

Across the school, verbal and written feedback to pupils is timely, detailed and effective in moving learning on. Reports to parents are a particular strength. They are bespoke to each individual and clearly outline a pupil's attitude to learning, current achievement and next steps in learning for each subject area.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and happy community that promotes good behaviour and courtesy from all pupils. Pupils' personal, moral and spiritual development is a high priority for all staff at the school and collectively they promote this development very well. The school's values are woven throughout school life. Staff support pupils' and their families' emotional needs well so that they can engage positively with learning and benefit from all the experiences the school offers.

The school provides valuable opportunities for collective worship, which impacts positively on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect on the key messages and values, and how they may apply these to their daily lives, for example when considering the value of love and how pupils might use their tongues in a positive or a negative way when speaking to others.

Pupils learn the importance of helping others whenever they can and staff encourage them to make a positive difference to their community. The school aids pupils to contribute positively to the wider community for example through 'project presbyterian pickers'. In addition, pupils are helped to consider people around the world who are less fortunate than themselves, for example by collecting for a global Christian charity.

The school is not registered with the Welsh Government to provide specific additional learning provision. In the few cases where the school identifies that a pupil has additional learning needs, the school responds swiftly. Families are directed to external agencies and the school provides their children with effective support.

The school ensures that pupils understand how to keep safe online. In addition, secondary pupils better understand the dangers of open water after watching a production by Theatr Na Nog, at Cardiff Bay.

Leaders are developing a sound culture of safeguarding at the school. There are robust arrangements for recording and following up when pupils are absent. The designated safeguarding person provides all staff with regular safeguarding training. There is a well-understood system to report safeguarding concerns relating to pupils or staff.

The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive safeguarding training. A few issues relating to school policy and record keeping were raised with the school and these were addressed during the inspection.

Leadership and management

Leaders at Ely Presbyterian Church School promote a clear vision for the school built upon a strong Christian ethos and the highest moral principles. This vision is embodied by leaders and staff, permeates all aspects of the school's work and is fundamental in sustaining the caring community that supports success for all pupils.

The school is led effectively by a cohesive pair of headteachers. Responsibility for important areas of the school's work is distributed between them suitably according to their complementary experience and skills. Together they have high ambitions for their pupils and high expectations of their staff. They know the school community extremely well and are well respected, and both staff and parents appreciate that they are highly visible and readily accessible.

Leaders' operational management of the school is secure. Throughout the school, staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities supported by suitable job descriptions. Senior leaders meet weekly to discuss operational and strategic developments and regular purposeful whole-staff meetings ensure that everyone is kept well informed about what is happening within the school. As a result, staff at all levels work together effectively in pupils' best interests and are proud of the trusting relationships they have established across the school community.

Leaders have built and maintain outstanding relationships with parents. Parents are well informed about their child's progress and the work of the school through a digital platform and detailed and individualised written reports. Formal and informal lines of communication between parents and the school are effective and parents trust all staff to act upon any concerns they may raise. Parents share the Christian ethos of the school and are fully supportive of the education the school provides with the resources at its disposal. As a result, parents complement the work of the school and support their children with their learning, well-being and enrichment activities at home.

Leaders conduct an annual process of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, which all members of staff contribute meaningfully towards. Leaders analyse a range of data, including standardised pupil attainment scores, parental questionnaires, pupil suggestions, scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations undertaken by the senior leadership team. However, leaders' observation of lessons focuses on describing what teachers do, rather than evaluating the impact teaching has on learning. As a result, self-evaluation does not evaluate the quality of teaching or identify when teaching does not consistently challenge pupils at their level.

Leaders provide staff with suitable opportunities to engage in professional learning, which are linked to the school's improvement priorities. Additionally, individual teachers can access bespoke external training to improve their own practice such as updates from GCSE examination boards when they revise the content of their

examinations. Newly appointed staff benefit from a supportive induction and mentoring programme.

Governance arrangements are appropriate to the school's context and provide suitable oversight, support and challenge to the school's leadership. Members of the governing body hold a variety of positions across the school and separate these functions suitably. They collectively possess an appropriate range of skills to underpin the work of the school successfully. Governors have collective oversight of the school's finances and other important aspects of the school's work are supported through sub-committees, for example an executive management committee, which has oversight of day-to-day operations. All governors have undertaken safeguarding training and contribute to annual reviews of school policies.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff 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/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- 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 had 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 (where appropriate), 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 ([Estyn Website](#))

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [Estyn Website](#)