

A report on

St Mary The Virgin C.I.W. Primary School

**North Church Street
Butetown
Cardiff
CF10 5HB**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

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

About St Mary The Virgin C.I.W. Primary School

Name of provider	St Mary The Virgin C.I.W. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Voluntary Aided Church in Wales Primary School
Number of pupils on roll	211
Pupils of statutory school age	141
Number in nursery classes	41
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 21.7%)	48.9%
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 9.2%)	13.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	74.5%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2013

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/04/2019
Start date of inspection	03/11/2025

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.

Summary

Saint Mary the Virgin Church in Wales School lies at the heart of the local area and is a focal point of its diverse community. Leaders, governors and staff work hard to build strong relationships with the school family and a wide range of external partners. A notable strength of this highly inclusive school is the positive well-being and family ethos where all staff and pupils feel happy and safe. Effective safeguarding and thoughtful nurturing practices support a culture that celebrates diversity and enables all pupils to flourish academically, socially and personally.

Teachers and support staff build strong relationships with pupils and understand their needs well. In many classes the quality of teaching ensures that many pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those with barriers to learning, make good progress from their starting points.

School leaders and teachers work collaboratively to design an inclusive and authentic inquiry-based curriculum that provides pupils with suitable learning experiences across all areas of learning. Most pupils engage well in lessons and are keen to talk about their learning. However, on occasions provision does not always support pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum well enough.

Communication with families is open and effective and staff work closely with parents. Leaders are visible at key times during the school day and parents trust that the school is doing the best for all pupils and considers their views. Overall, the school works hard to build trust with all families and provide a broad range of effective interventions to support all pupils across the school.

Leaders, staff and governors understand the community well, consequently they ensure the school provides and delivers the best opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all pupils. Leaders and governors work well together and identify key priorities to improve the school. However, their evaluation of the areas for improvement do not always focus sharply enough on the quality of teaching, including the variability in its effectiveness, and on outcomes for all pupils.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Improve the consistency of teaching across the school so that all pupils experience high-quality learning
- R2. Ensure that teachers provide beneficial learning opportunities to support pupils to apply their skills progressively across the curriculum, especially in Welsh oracy and numeracy
- R3. Strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus more sharply on pupil progress and the impact of teaching on learning outcomes

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of Saint Mary the Virgin school. Leaders and staff work diligently to ensure that there is a compassionate and inclusive family ethos where all pupils can succeed.

The headteacher provides thoughtful, purposeful leadership that sets a clear strategic direction for the school's development. She works well with other leaders to share an effective and well communicated vision, focussing clearly on promoting and supporting the diverse needs of all pupils. The school is a calm and happy community, where all staff and pupils show a high level of respect for each other. Pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn and share their views. Overall, pupils feel safe and well cared for. Both pupils and their families trust the school to support them at all times.

Provision for pupils' well-being is a strength of the school. The highly inclusive environment and implementation of enhanced ALN provision support pupils' personal development and helps them to thrive. Staff know pupils well and develop strong working relationships across the school. Most pupils gain a good understanding of the vocabulary needed to manage their emotions and use strategies effectively to deal with them. This means that across the school, most pupils behave well and engage positively with their learning. Many pupils take pride in their work and persevere to seek new solutions when challenged.

Many pupils enter the school with social and literacy skills that are below the expected level for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils make good progress from their starting points, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and other identified barriers to learning. During lessons, many teachers move learning along at a suitable pace and challenge pupils at an appropriate level. However, in a few classes, activities are over-directed by adults and this stifles pupils' ability to think for themselves and develop effectively as independent learners.

Teachers use a variety of assessments and evaluations to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. They use this information well to inform teaching and planning and to identify where additional support or interventions are necessary. Most teachers and support staff have clear objectives for pupils' learning and in general use questioning effectively to move learning forward. Overall, verbal and written feedback supports pupils to improve their work and identify their next steps in learning appropriately.

Teachers deliver an inquiry-based curriculum that enables the successful development of pupils' literacy and problem-solving skills. They provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history, cultural and linguistic heritage of their local

area and Wales and to emulate the artwork of Welsh artists. Overall, learning experiences engage and interest most pupils well, although at times opportunities for pupils to apply and develop skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum, particularly in numeracy and Welsh oracy, are less well developed.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on professional learning that focuses on teaching and learning across the school. Specific training on oracy skills has built staff expertise. As a result, most pupils speak and listen with confidence in collaborative group discussions. Staff deliver high quality guided group reading sessions and consequently most pupils read a range of texts with fluency and confidence. This supports them to access all areas of the curriculum successfully. Overall, most pupils write at an appropriate level for different audiences and purposes. The school ensures beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their digital skills and most pupils make effective progress in this area.

The school's ethos, collective worship and learning opportunities contribute significantly to the moral, social and cultural development of most pupils. Pupils show a strong appreciation of cultural diversity by participating in creative and expressive activities, such as dance, drama and heritage days that allow pupils to dress in national costume and celebrate their identity.

Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the needs of the local community and their work to support families is highly effective. For instance, the school's family engagement officer works closely with staff to identify pupils and families in need of additional help and support and provide early intervention. This holistic and responsive support impacts positively on pupils' well-being, progress and attendance. Governors understand their role in promoting equality. They place a high priority on closing the attainment gap for pupils affected by poverty and are fully committed to supporting all pupils and their families.

Leaders build strong links with the wider community and work closely with the local church and other community organisations. The school is a visible and active presence throughout the locality. For example, pupils are fully involved in community action projects and have presented at The Senedd. In addition, the school places a significant focus on raising the plight of refugees and is a welcoming place for all.

Governors are committed to the school and provide appropriate support and challenge. They have a wide range of skills and expertise that enables them to fulfil their roles effectively. Leaders have a good understanding of the issues facing the school, such as the challenging financial situation, limitations of the school building and the increasingly diverse range of needs among pupils. Leaders monitor the budget carefully and utilise grant funding appropriately to support the needs of all pupils, providing engaging and purposeful experiences for all.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation activities to monitor the progress of all pupils. In consultation with staff, they use this information to address the needs of the pupils and prioritise next steps in school improvement. However, self-evaluation processes do not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and outcomes.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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.

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