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

A report on

St Bernadette's R.C. Primary School

Bryn Heulog
Off Pentwyn Drive
Pentwyn
Cardiff
CF23 7JB

Date of inspection: December 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About St Bernadette's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Bernadette's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	234
Pupils of statutory school age	180
Number in nursery classes	21
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%)	16.3%
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%)	6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.4%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	18.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	21/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11/11/2013
Start date of inspection	05/12/2022

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

Pupils at St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are very proud to be members of its community. 'Learn, Live, Believe' clearly reflects the aims of the school and underpins its Christian values. Nearly all pupils and staff feel safe and valued. The headteacher and the staff have created a very happy environment that welcomes all pupils.

Most pupils develop their knowledge and skills well. They make strong progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Pupils' oracy skills in English from the Nursery class to Year 6 are exceptional. Although the pupils have a great enthusiasm for learning Welsh, they do not always make the progress they could in developing their Welsh language skills.

Pupils understand how much staff care for them and there is a feeling of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils' collaboration in class activities and around the school is a strength. They are kind and considerate to each other and their behaviour is exceptional at all times. They contribute well to a variety of groups and committees, and enthusiastically share examples of where their influence has had a positive impact on school life.

All staff are ambitious for pupils to succeed and support them successfully to develop positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan engaging activities for pupils to enable them to make effective progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They provide pupils with suitable opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding but, generally, the whole school approach to develop the Curriculum for Wales lacks clarity.

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, ensures that the well-being of pupils and the wider school community is at the heart of the school. Leaders communicate well with parents. Governors know the school very well and fulfil their role as critical friend, asking challenging questions about decision-making, which supports the headteacher in moving the school forward.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that the curriculum is meaningful for all pupils and builds systematically and coherently across the school

R2 Develop pupils' independent skills

R3 Ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to improve their own work

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Around half the pupils start school with skills that are at least as expected for their age. Most pupils settle quickly and during their time at the school make good progress including pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), and those eligible for free school meals.

Most pupils develop excellent speaking and listening skills. On entry to the school, most improve their vocabulary quickly and develop speaking skills that enable them to engage well with adults and with each other. By Year 1 they have a sound understanding of what makes a good question when preparing to interview a character from the class book. As the pupils progress through the school, they build and develop a mature and an extensive vocabulary which is used successfully to construct a debate, for example on the effect of the tourist industry on Antarctica. They talk very knowledgably about past and current work.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to developing their Welsh language skills. During their time from nursery to Year 2, many pupils use simple greetings and phrases suitably and overall pupils' skills are appropriate. Across the school, pupils are beginning to understand the value of being multilingual and respond positively to learning British Sign Language, and sign in Welsh.

Pupils from nursery to Year 2 really enjoy listening to stories, they talk about different characters well and sequence a story successfully. Through a variety of practical activities, the pupils in the nursery develop their knowledge of letter sounds successfully and as they progress through the school, they make steady progress in developing their reading skills. Year 2 pupils can read and understand simple texts. From Year 3 to Year 6 pupils' progress is accelerated, and they develop as competent readers. They hold meaningful conversations about their book preferences and use their research skills well, for example when gathering information about the benefits of being bilingual.

Many pupils develop their writing skills well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils make marks skilfully, for example when developing individual letters. As their skills develop, many pupils in Year 2 use simple sentence structures and spell words accurately when creating adverts for their chocolate bars. By Year 6, most write increasingly at length using a mature range of vocabulary, for example when writing a story about the Wolf from the book 'Eye of the Wolf' or when composing a poem about Queen Elizabeth. Overall, pupils write well in other areas of learning.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing a range of skills in their maths lessons. Pupils across the school have a good grasp of number work and use correct mathematical vocabulary when sharing their methods of calculation. The younger pupils in the nursery recognise numbers through a range of practical activities, for example when measuring the length of sticks. As the pupils move through the years, they recall and build on previous learning successfully. Pupils support each other well when tackling word problems and confidently share more than one method with their

classmates. In Year 6, more able pupils choose and use formal calculation strategies accurately. Most pupils use their mathematical skills in other subjects suitably.

Nearly all pupils confidently use digital programmes to support their learning. They research about different types of fish in our oceans and create short videos on stories from the Bible. Pupils from the reception class can use technology competently, for example, to give instructions to move a mechanical toy. The older pupils in Year 6 are able to interrogate data bases and create their own on the Welsh football team, for example. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 are able to code confidently and are beginning to write their own games. They also apply their creative skills competently to create stop motion films based on their class reading book.

Many pupils develop creative and musical skills well during well-focused dance and music lessons. Across the school, pupils confidently use a variety of mediums in art lessons to create a leaf collage and sketch portraits to celebrate how everyone differs. Younger pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills appropriately in the well-resourced outdoor areas. Pupils across the school develop their physical skills well in both class lessons and after school clubs.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The relationship between pupils and staff is a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils feel that the school is a happy and caring place, where staff value their opinions and treat them fairly. They feel safe in school and know whom to turn to if they are worried or concerned about anything. They are very polite to each other and treat all staff and visitors with respect.

Nearly all pupils have a significant input in improving their own and others wellbeing. Following the outcome of a pupil questionnaire, pupils have created calm areas in each classroom to provide a space for their peers who need to take a moment and gather their thoughts in order to continue with their learning. This idea is reflected on the school field where pupils can use the willow village in the same way. As a result, working relationships, collaboration, and behaviour around the school are exemplary.

Across the school, pupils have a secure understanding of their rights and contribute maturely to discussions about fairness and equality. Nearly all pupils show enthusiasm for taking on additional responsibilities such as becoming part of the extensive pupil voice groups. The Well-being group promotes sustainability successfully through activities such as redesigning clothes and showcasing its ideas in a fashion show at the school. In addition to this, the pupils grow vegetables and flowers, which strengthens their understanding of ecological matters. Pupils' understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily is developing well. A good example is how pupils use the vegetables they have grown themselves to make, for example carrot soup. Many pupils are developing highly effective leadership skills. Pupils who are digital leaders work alongside other pupils and staff to share new skills and to resolve any issues arising from the school's digital programmes.

The digital leaders improve standards and provision of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school by working alongside both pupils

and staff. Nearly all pupils know the importance of how to keep themselves and others safe online.

Nearly all pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. Within their classes, pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning. Pupils listen attentively to staff and their peers and demonstrate high levels of determination to succeed. From an early age, pupils show resilience in their work, particularly when faced with a challenge. For example, when pupils in Year 1 design a trap to capture the Evil Peas from the reading book, they turn to their friends for support if in doubt. However, in most cases the need for help has already been recognised by their peers, and they offer to show them how they would tackle the problem. Most pupils are beginning to contribute to what they want to learn. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their independent skills are not fully developed and learning from Year 2 to Year 6 is too directed by staff. Pupils are beginning to be involved in improving their own and their peers' work.

Through the extensive work on the pupils' rights and school values, nearly all pupils have developed a broad understanding of the needs of others and how they can help in society. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 show consistently good attitudes and consideration to those who are older than them. They visit the residents of a nearby care home weekly, for example to play board games and read books, and in return the pupils learn new skills such as dancing. Through the work of the school council's fund-raising activities, the pupils show empathy towards others in the wider community. The school's race for life is re named to race for Ukraine to raise money for the war victims in the country.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a number of purposeful learning experiences, which stimulate and engage all pupils successfully. Over the last few years, since the pandemic, the school's curriculum has been further strengthened to support the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Well-being is a particularly strong focus of the school and pupils' suggestions and contributions have a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Nearly all teachers organise their classrooms well, which provide pupils with effective environments that create a positive ethos for learning. They show a thorough understanding of subject knowledge. Teachers give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently and plan activities that build on previous learning effectively. In class, pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and support each other through effective questioning. This is a strength. When teaching is at its best, lesson activities are matched well to pupils' abilities, and they are challenged well. However, the overuse of structured lessons and activities restricts many pupils becoming independent learners.

Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are high, and this results in the exemplary behaviour seen across the school. The culture of mutual respect as seen in all classes between staff and pupils, and, pupils and their peers, results in excellent collaboration. Highly skilled teaching assistants provide valuable targeted support to pupils in class. The literacy and emotional programmes enable pupils to access their learning and make good progress against their starting points. Most

teachers utilise the outdoor learning environment successfully. For example, the forest school area and pond are used well to support pupils' engagement with nature. Planned activities for pupils from the nursery to Year 2 in the story shed and prayer garden support their literacy and well-being effectively. When thinking about future careers, pupils have opportunities to work with local artists and learn about traders and businesses during the 'world of work week'.

In many classes, teachers use success criteria suitably to support pupils' learning. This is beginning to help pupils understand their own strengths and areas for improvement. All teachers provide pupils with regular, appropriate feedback, both verbally and in writing. Teachers' comments celebrate pupils' work well. However, they do not consistently provide pupils with opportunities to evaluate and improve their own and the work of their peers.

All staff are beginning to use Welsh language phrases suitably throughout the school day, which is having a positive effect on the pupils' enthusiasm for becoming bilingual. Overall, the school is developing an appropriate provision to improve pupils' Welsh language skills.

The school has taken appropriate steps to redesign its curriculum to align with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales and its own vision for pupils' learning and wellbeing. However, the range of topics don't link directly with the needs and interests of its pupils and the community it serves.

In addition, the school plans stand-alone themed weeks which are unrelated to the overarching termly topics. During these weeks, teachers provide real- life experiences and pupils develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills well. They consult regularly with pupils to plan what they want to learn. For example, during 'eco fortnight', Year 6 organise a mock protest on the yard and record a news bulletin to raise awareness of the impact of plastic pollution on the environment. However, overall, it is unclear how the topics and themed weeks build systematically on pupils existing knowledge, understanding and skills and contribute to a coherent whole school curriculum.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a warm and friendly community where all staff place a high priority on the well-being of pupils. They work tirelessly to create a safe and caring environment for the pupils and their families. As a result, pupils feel calm and safe. In addition, the 'daily check in' in all classes is an effective way for staff to keep a close eye on pupils' welfare. As a result, most pupils to develop strong social and personal skills. Staff promote the importance of excellent behaviour, courtesy, and respect.

The provision for all pupils who have been identified with ALN is robust. The ALN co-ordinator and staff track and monitor pupil progress carefully. They identify and plan a range of effective programmes to support identified pupils. The teaching assistants deliver extensive literacy, numeracy and social and personal programmes in each class, which make positive and lasting change to pupils' well-being and their ability to learn. The school works closely with support agencies and the local secondary school to provide specific activities and support sessions for pupils' emotional, health, and social needs, where appropriate.

Whole school acts of collective worship make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect on key values and how they might apply these to their daily lives. The school celebrates its Welsh heritage appropriately, for example by holding an annual Eisteddfod and visiting local places of interest. There are also opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world suitably. Pupils learn about people who have responded positively to adversity in order to drive change. For example, they study Betty Campbell and her quest to improve learning and equal opportunities for pupils in Cardiff.

The school provides a range of stimulating trips and visits which support the curriculum, such as pupils in Year 6 completing adventurous activities during their residential trip to Llangrannog. Several after-school clubs promote pupils' physical and mental well-being well. For example, members of staff who play for Cardiff City ladies team take an after-school football session for boys and girls. Pupils benefit physically, and these positive role models provide an inspiration, particularly for the girls.

There are numerous opportunities for pupils to influence the life of the school and develop their leadership skills by taking on additional responsibilities, for example as a school councillor or a member of the 'Mini Vinnies'. Pupils who are representatives of the 'Active Travel Ambassadors' help ensure that their community is safe through working with the police to monitor the speed of traffic in the area. As a result, the pupils are now working with the council to reduce the speed limit near the school.

The school has established a strong culture of respect and equality within its community, for example by devising and creating a new vision, which underpins its life and work. The inclusive ethos and visits from the community promote pupils' moral and spiritual development well. Teachers encourage pupils to think about people less fortunate than themselves through a variety of fundraising activities. For example, the school helps people living in poverty through holding a family fast day.

There is a robust safeguarding culture in the school. Teachers plan a suitable range of activities that develop pupils' understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe in person and online.

Leadership and management

Leaders ensure that St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary school provides a caring and inclusive environment. They have a clear vision for the school based on valuing every pupil and giving them opportunities to thrive and be successful. The headteacher provides strong leadership. Alongside her deputy, she creates and maintains an effective team, which ensures that pupils' well-being is a priority and enables them to make good progress. All staff support and maintain a strong safeguarding culture. Staff promote and embed professional values, which sets a good example for pupils.

Members of the governing body know the school very well and are highly supportive. They keep up to date with national developments and improvement priorities through regular visits to the school and presentations by staff. Their strong understanding of the school's improvement priorities enables them, as critical friends to provide

effective challenge to leaders. They support the headteacher effectively to develop elements of provision, which enables the school to be an effective learning environment. Governors ensure that the school has effective policies and procedures to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

Work to address national priorities, such as the additional learning needs reform, and addressing the impact of poverty, is successful. The school has focused appropriately on numerous training opportunities for staff and for them to collaborate with local schools to develop an understanding of the Curriculum for Wales. However, the school is only beginning to develop a whole school approach to the curriculum.

The headteacher has developed effective management systems and, as a result, all members of staff feel very well-informed and engaged in the life of the school. Dialogue and communication with parents about whole-school issues and class-specific activities are comprehensive and a strength of the school. The school website, newsletters, and digital platforms are highly informative and provide a useful way for teachers to share information and to respond to parental feedback.

Self-evaluation processes are effective. Teachers carry out monitoring activities such as the scrutiny of pupils' books and learning walks, which they use to identify improvement priorities, such as the need to develop pupils' Welsh oracy. Over time, the school has identified the need to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills in English, and, as a result of adapting lessons and introducing a whole school oracy week, pupils' skills across the school are excellent. The school improvement plan has clear success criteria and timescales and involves governors and pupils in the process.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos that promotes and supports the professional learning of all staff successfully and is often linked meaningfully to self-evaluation findings and improvement priorities. For example, leaders respond to the aspirations of support staff by facilitating opportunities for them to attend training to deliver a range of emotional support programmes and shoulder wider responsibilities. The school collaborates well with other providers, such as institutes that provide initial teacher education. This helps support the development of new teachers and to develop their professional practice effectively.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances prudently. They balance short-term and longer-term needs carefully and ensure that spending is prioritised on improving pupil outcomes. The school uses grant funding effectively, including the pupil development grant, so that all pupils who require bespoke interventions to improve their learning or well-being can access the support they need. The school's inclusive attitude that 'no child ever misses out' ensures that pupils can also access residential trips and music tuition that they might not otherwise be able to take part in.

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:

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: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 10/02/2023