



## Report summary for parents and carers on St James Primary

**Date of inspection: June 2024**

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

# Summary

Since taking up her post, the headteacher has developed a more inclusive ethos that gives pupils a sense of belonging to the school. Working with staff and parents, she has developed a clear vision aimed at providing engaging and effective teaching and learning experiences, that encourage pupils to 'bloom'. This has helped to promote a growing sense of teamwork and a commitment among staff to offer the best for all pupils.

Staff support pupils' moral and social development well, teaching values like tolerance sensitively. As a result, most pupils are respectful of others and behave well. The specialist resource bases (SRBs) provide a welcoming, calm environment where most pupils feel settled and secure. The school supports pupils' emotional and social well-being effectively. Leaders have embedded purposeful strategies, and set aside dedicated spaces like the sensory room, which provide helpful spaces for pupils to calm themselves and prepare for learning.

Leaders set high expectations for themselves, staff and pupils. They provide professional learning opportunities for all staff, focused on improving teaching and learning. However, the impact of professional development is too variable and there remain too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In around half of lessons, teachers do not provide purposeful enough learning experiences that allow pupils to make effective progress. They do not match the pace and challenge of learning tasks to pupils' ability closely enough.

The school is beginning to embed a curriculum that offers a range of systematic, progressive and engaging learning activities. However, these are recent changes, and inconsistencies in teachers' understanding of the curriculum mean that they have had a limited impact on pupils' progress so far.

Many pupils enter the school with language and social skills below those expected for their age. Staff are positive language role models, and support pupils to develop their oracy skills well. However, a majority of pupils' reading skills do not develop strongly enough. Similarly, around half of pupils do not write well enough in a wide enough range of styles. A majority of pupils develop appropriate number skills. However, a minority do not develop a broad enough range of mathematics skills.

The school has effective systems to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and many make good progress towards their individual targets. In the SRBs, clear learning intentions and engaging activities help many pupils make beneficial progress, although not all activities are adapted well enough to meet individual needs.

Leaders are beginning to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement more sharply. While they implement improvement strategies thoughtfully, for instance to develop pupils' reading skills, these do not always result in effective enough change.

Leaders monitor attendance carefully and have begun to reduce pupils' absences. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains too high. Governors support the school diligently, but do not always challenge the school strongly on the progress that pupils make in their learning.

# Recommendations and next steps

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

- R1 Ensure that all teachers support and challenge pupils appropriately so that they make effective progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Improve self-evaluation so that it focuses closely on identifying the impact of improvement strategies and professional learning on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
- R3 Reduce the level of persistent absentees
- R4 Ensure that the school's curriculum provides pupils with meaningful learning experiences that enable them to make consistent and systematic progress

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. A small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the school to monitor progress about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report.

If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the [full report](#).



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