

A report on

St Mary's R.C. Primary School

**Lea Road
Wrexham
LL13 7NA**

Date of inspection: October 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About St Mary's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Mary's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	342
Pupils of statutory school age	266
Number in nursery classes	31
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 22.9%)	8.6%
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 11.1%)	3.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	38.7%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	October 2016

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/07/2019
Start date of inspection	06/10/2025

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

St. Mary's RC Primary School is a highly effective and inclusive learning community, guided by purposeful leadership and a clear strategic vision. The headteacher, senior leaders, and governors foster collaboration and trust, creating a cohesive staff team dedicated to pupils' well-being and success. The school's culture is underpinned by mutual respect and a strong safeguarding ethos, ensuring that every pupil feels valued, safe, and supported.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is a notable strength. There are carefully planned experiences, that enable pupils to learn empathy, responsibility, and respect for diversity, forming a harmonious and caring community. Teaching is lively, well-organised, and engaging, leading most pupils to make strong progress and take pride in their work. However, in a minority of lessons and particularly in mathematics, a few tasks offer insufficient challenge for more able learners. Lessons promote curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, supported by warm relationships between staff and pupils.

The school's provision for oracy and English language development is exemplary. A majority of pupils join the school with limited English skills. Through patient, structured teaching and rich exposure to quality literature, they become articulate communicators and enthusiastic readers and writers by Year 6. Mathematics teaching is systematic, and as a result, many pupils make sound progress. Most pupils are enthusiastic Welsh language learners and respond to straightforward questions in Welsh. Most develop valuable digital skills and use technology confidently and safely.

The curriculum is broad, relevant, and thoughtfully integrated across subjects. For example, there are meaningful links to religion, values, and ethics. Most pupils behave impeccably and show pride in their school, contributing actively through pupil leadership roles and initiatives such as the eco-committee. Staff identify the few pupils with additional learning needs early and provide targeted support, often in collaboration with external agencies.

Leaders and governors have a deep understanding of the school's context and use self-evaluation effectively to drive improvement. Professional learning is integral to school life, with collaboration and enquiry promoting innovation. Overall, the school is a vibrant, nurturing environment where pupils flourish academically, socially, and emotionally, preparing them well for future success.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Ensure that teaching across the school encourages all pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve as well as they could

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, the headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide purposeful and effective leadership. This provides a clear, strategic direction and fosters a strong sense of community. Leaders set high expectations and model professional values that inspire collaboration and trust among staff. This results in a dedicated and cohesive team who work together to create a nurturing and safe environment where pupils feel valued and respected. There is a positive safeguarding culture. Strong professional relationships, along with a shared mutual respect between the pupils and adults, underpin the school's inclusive ethos.

The school's provision to promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is particularly strong. Adults and pupils from many cultures and backgrounds work and play together well. As a result, everyone feels known, cared for, and valued. Carefully planned experiences nurture pupils' empathy and sense of responsibility, resulting in a caring and inclusive community.

As a result, over time, most pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points because lessons are lively, well planned, and engaging. Most pupils behave well, and nearly all show enthusiasm for their learning. There are warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff. This creates a happy, motivated, diverse community where everyone is valued and able to succeed.

A particular strength of the school is the provision for oracy and English language development. A majority of pupils speak English as an additional language and start at the school with a limited vocabulary. Through patient, systematic teaching, including the repetition of early stories and songs, over time they become confident speakers. The school's progressive approach builds language skills for all pupils, from listening and speaking through to reading and writing. Teachers make exemplary use of well-chosen, high-quality, diverse children's literature. This immerses pupils in rich vocabulary, expressive language, and imaginative storytelling, fostering a deep love of reading and creative writing. As a result, by Year 6, many pupils communicate, read, and write at levels exceeding expectations for their age.

Teachers ensure that learning in mathematics is systematic and progressive. Many pupils move confidently from practical activities to abstract reasoning, applying their numeracy skills across the curriculum. However, in a minority of lessons across the school, numeracy and mathematical tasks offer too little challenge, especially for more able learners, and this limits their progress.

Staff model the Welsh language consistently and encourage its use in class and around school. Most pupils listen attentively and respond appropriately to a range of familiar instructions in Welsh. Younger pupils respond to straightforward questions enthusiastically. Older pupils begin to extend their vocabulary, using longer sentences as they progress. Most pupils develop their digital skills well. Younger pupils use technology confidently, while older pupils apply coding, data handling, and critical thinking skills to real-life contexts. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online. The Cyber Stewards effectively promote safe online behaviour among their peers.

Spotlight – Using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support pupils to develop creative writing

Teachers are innovative in supporting pupils to strengthen their writing. For example, they use well-chosen children's literature to spark their class's interest and promote creative writing. They support pupils to write imaginatively, selecting well-chosen vocabulary. Once pupils have aired, verbally rehearsed and then drafted their writing, they use AI generated images to recreate their descriptions. Pupils compare the image to the picture they had visualised, inside their heads. This gives the pupils, especially those learning English as an additional language, useful and thought-provoking feedback about where they might strengthen the description or refine their text.

Overall, teaching is of a good quality. Most lessons are calm, purposeful, and engaging. Teachers co-operate to plan interesting, exciting work for their pupils, using day-to-day assessments purposefully. They manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well, maintaining a positive learning environment. Teachers provide timely feedback to their pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils take pride in their work and enjoy sharing in one another's success. In most lessons, learning moves suitably briskly with engaging activities that match well with what pupils need to learn next. However, in a few instances across the school, when tasks are less demanding or the pace slows, pupils' progress dips.

The curriculum is broad, interesting, and thoughtfully planned. It integrates knowledge, skills, and understanding across subjects, with clear links to religion, values, and ethics. Learning experiences are relevant, inspiring, and connected to real-world contexts. As a result, most pupils develop a sound understanding of their local area, modern day Wales, and the wider world.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are courteous, considerate, and proud of their achievements. Most pupils attend school regularly. This is because they enjoy learning and feel part of a caring community. Pupil voice is a valued feature of school life, with numerous leadership groups promoting responsibility and inclusion. For example, the eco-committee runs a healthy tuck shop, using any profits to

purchase additional sports equipment. This initiative builds pupils' practical decision-making and teamwork skills well.

Teachers identify additional learning needs early and provide timely, targeted support that is closely monitored and adapted as required. Leaders work collaboratively with external agencies to ensure that the support meets pupils' needs effectively. All staff and leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the needs of pupils and their families. They show sensitivity to those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement, for example through trauma.

Leaders know the school well and ensure that self-evaluation and monitoring responsibilities are shared by the staff. These processes effectively inform improvement planning, recognising the school's strengths and accurately identifying the next improvement priorities. Leaders make good use of pupil progress meetings, for example to identify and address the few instances of underachievement promptly. They have begun to analyse the progress of particular groups over time, such as to identify the impact of improvements to the provision on pupils new to English.

Professional growth is aligned with performance management and is central to the school's culture. Shared professional learning and self-evaluation activities are rigorous and meaningful. They enable teachers to refine their practice and share expertise. Leaders encourage collaboration through working groups and enquiry projects. These support innovation and improvement in teaching and learning, and lead to measurable gains in pupil progress, for example in writing.

Spotlight – Using professional enquiry to build a learning community

At St Mary's RC School, the professional development approach through whole school enquiry has inspired and benefitted staff and their pupils. Statutory performance management is known as 'professional growth'. This approach includes a breadth of professional reading and careful classroom trials of better focused methodologies. It results in improved learning experiences and greater staff motivation. This teacher-led innovation promotes collaboration both within and beyond the school, with a clear focus on school improvement, ultimately making a positive impact on learners' outcomes.

The governing body is well-informed, proactive and committed. Governors understand the school's context and priorities. They visit regularly to understand the school's work first-hand, and act as constructive critical friends. Governors oversee the school's finances carefully. They ensure that resources, including the pupil development grant, are used effectively to promote high-quality learning and the well-being of all pupils, particularly those who may have specific needs, are new to English, or those from low-income households.

Overall, the school provides a vibrant, nurturing, and inclusive learning environment where pupils thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. High-quality teaching, a rich curriculum, and compassionate leadership enables the school to support nearly all pupils to make very strong progress, and develop the confidence, curiosity, and respect that prepares them well for the future.

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.

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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