

**A report on**

**St Mary's R.C. Primary School**

**Ffordd Llewelyn  
Flint  
Flintshire  
CH6 5JZ**

**Date of inspection: November 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	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Category 1 English-medium school
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	274
Pupils of statutory school age	202
Number in nursery classes	37
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%)	22.7%
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%)	9.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	28.7%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2021

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	19/02/2018
Start date of inspection	24/11/2025

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](https://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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school based on creating a nurturing and inclusive environment where all pupils are able to progress. A strong sense of mutual respect and trust exists between staff and pupils, creating a positive atmosphere throughout the school. The school has a strong partnership with parents, supported by effective communication and regular updates on pupil progress. This helps to ensure a supportive learning community that strengthens pupils' confidence and eagerness to learn. Most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) or those acquiring English as an additional language.

Most pupils are polite and respectful and show enjoyment in their learning. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and nearly all benefit from the learning support they receive. Although most pupils enjoy coming to school, the levels of persistent absence remain too high.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a range of meaningful learning experiences. Teachers use a range of strategies to successfully engage the interest of pupils, and learning activities provide appropriate challenge for most pupils. Most pupils are enthusiastic about their education. However, in older classes, over-direction, at times, limits their opportunities to make choices about how to present their learning. Teachers and support staff provide effective support for the development of pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Digital and spoken Welsh skills are developed effectively. Number skills are secure, though opportunities to apply numeracy across the curriculum are less frequent.

Governors are well-informed about the school's strengths and areas to develop, and they provide effective challenge and support for school leaders. Staff benefit from a range of professional learning activities that have a positive effect on the standards of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make.

## Recommendations

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

- R1. Increase the opportunities for older pupils to make choices about how to present their learning
- R2. Improve opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3. Improve rates of persistent absence

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is a happy, caring and inclusive learning environment. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, based on nurturing the potential of everyone. They share this vision successfully with pupils, parents and staff. This leads pupils to be thoughtful and respectful learners who are well prepared for future learning. There is a strong sense of trust, pride and respect between pupils and staff that permeates naturally across the school community.

During their time at school, most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Nearly all pupils settle into school life quickly and respond well to routines. Upon entry to the school, pupils start with a wide range of skills and abilities for their age. Staff provide well-planned and purposeful outdoor and indoor learning experiences. This helps most of the youngest pupils, including those who start school with skills below those typical for their age, to begin to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding quickly across the curriculum. Staff engage pupils well in lessons and help them stay focused. Nearly all teachers use questioning effectively to deepen understanding, and most pupils respond well to feedback. In some cases, this feedback leads to clear improvements in pupils' work.

Teachers and classroom assistants model language effectively. On entry, a minority of pupils are acquiring English as an additional language or have developing communication skills. Pupils needing additional language support are identified at an early stage and, as a result of effective input and guidance, make strong progress with their oracy skills. Over time, most pupils develop as confident speakers and attentive listeners. Most pupils' reading skills develop well and by the later years of primary school, many pupils are fluent, enthusiastic readers who express opinions about different genres and read with good pace and expression.

A strong focus on early writing development ensures that, over time, most pupils make good progress in writing. Older pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences, and most pupils organise their writing into lively, interesting paragraphs selecting words to best suit the features of the genre. Staff provide a good range of opportunities for pupils for pupils to use their literacy skills to support their learning.

Most pupils develop good mathematical skills, and older pupils use a range of mathematical operations to solve equations. When prompted, many pupils articulate their mathematical thinking effectively. However, opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited. Most pupils develop sound digital skills.

Across the school, most staff model and deliver the Welsh language and promote Welsh culture effectively through stimulating activities. The youngest pupils respond well to basic instructions in Welsh. Teachers build on these early experiences appropriately and, by Year 6, many pupils have a good understanding of commands and vocabulary that link to class topics and are confident to use their incidental Welsh around the school during everyday activities or to greet visitors.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Younger pupils enjoy a stimulating range of learning experiences that help them to develop their love of learning. Across the school, pupils are given opportunities to contribute ideas to what they learn and, as a result, pupils are motivated and talk with enthusiasm about their learning. However, over direction at times limits opportunities for older pupils to make choices about how to present their work, and to be creative in their thinking.

The curriculum supports the development of social and emotional skills of pupils from all backgrounds effectively. It celebrates diversity and pupils develop awareness and understanding of different identities, values, and relationships. This is a strength of the school. It enables pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, how to stay safe online, and to look after their mental and physical health and well-being. Most pupils are consistently polite and courteous. This has a positive effect on their attitudes to learning and leads to progress over time.

The school has robust systems to identify pupils' additional learning needs (ALN) effectively and efficiently. Class provision maps, regular professional dialogue between staff, and strong collaboration with a wide range of external agencies and specialists ensure that pupils receive support tailored to their individual needs. Well-developed tracking systems and targeted staff training further strengthen provision, enabling staff to meet pupils' needs consistently and successfully.

#### **Spotlight: Strong nurture provision**

The Rainbow Room is a calm space where small groups of pupils access individualised activities. This nurture provision, underpinned by strong person-centred practice, provides highly effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. A tailored curriculum designed around each pupil helps them to make strong progress. Skilled staff enable pupils to express themselves, regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour through a range of structured activities.

The school provides a wide range of enrichment activity that add to pupils' enjoyment of attending school and supports them to develop as healthy and confident individuals. Many older pupils take on leadership roles within a range of pupil groups and make a positive

contribution to school life. For example, the play leaders help to ensure happy, varied and inclusive activities for pupils during play times.

The school communicates effectively with parents, and they receive regular useful information about school activities and their children's work. The school plays an active role in the local community, and this contributes to the way that pupils and families engage positively with the school and how they benefit from the opportunities it offers. The school has many processes in place to promote the importance of good attendance. It works closely with wider services to support pupils whose attendance remains a concern. However, the level of persistently absent pupils remains too high.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. They offer beneficial opportunities for them to undertake a good range of professional learning, which firmly responds to their individual requirements and the school's priorities. Teachers collaborate effectively with staff from other schools to share effective practice. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that pupils make.

The school's self evaluation arrangements are robust and are closely linked to improvement plans. Members of the governing body work effectively with school leaders to identify strengths and areas for improvement. They support evaluation through their link roles and use the experiences from their regular visits to challenge and support school leaders with their work. There are clear plans in place to ensure that grant expenditure supports the school's strategic objectives. For example, to provide intervention sessions for pupils with specific additional emotional and social needs and to fund literacy and numeracy support sessions for targeted pupils.

Estyn does not inspect denominational religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for denominational religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

### **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](http://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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