

A report on

St Michael's R.C. Primary School

**John Place
Treforest
Pontypridd
RCT
CF37 1SP**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

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

About St Michael's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Michael's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf 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	248
Pupils of statutory school age	191
Number in nursery classes	28
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%)	11.6%
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 9.2%)	1.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	29.8%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018

A report on St Michael's R.C. Primary School
November 2025

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	04/06/2018
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

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Summary

St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School is a warm and happy inclusive learning environment with a welcoming ethos. Leaders and staff ensure that all pupils are safe, nurtured and supported.

Overall, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, sustaining concentration and behaving respectfully, which contributes to calm and purposeful classrooms. Strong relationships between staff and pupils foster high engagement and motivation. Across the school, most pupils make good progress in their literacy and mathematics lessons. They develop strong oracy and listening skills. Younger pupils benefit from well-planned activities to build their fine-motor and early writing skills. As they progress, pupils begin to write at length in a range of writing genres, with most older pupils writing creatively and at length. As they travel through school, most pupils develop effective reading skills, younger pupils increase their fluency well, whilst older pupils gain in confidence and become enthusiastic readers. Most pupils show growing confidence in spoken Welsh, though spontaneous use remains limited.

Many pupils make strong progress in mathematics. In mathematics lessons they apply learning well in practical activities. Most pupils develop beneficial digital communication skills. Nearly all pupils understand online safety, However, teachers' planning does not ensure that pupils have enough opportunity to apply the numeracy and digital skills in their learning across the curriculum.

The school has an engaging curriculum that offers authentic experiences that promote high aspirations. Most pupils have appropriate influence over what and how they learn. Teachers' assessment systems are robust, supporting effective progress for most learners, including those with additional needs. Teachers question effectively and provide feedback that pupils use well to improve their work. Most pupils develop independence and resilience. They also make good progress with their creative and physical skills and general well-being.

The school celebrates diversity and local culture, fostering belonging and spiritual, moral, and cultural development. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Provision for additional learning needs is strong. Staff collaborate well with each other and with outside agencies in order to ensure that the learning environment and resources are suitable and accessible to all pupils. Rates of pupil attendance are high. Leadership is a strength at the school. The headteacher has a clear vision for the education and well-being of pupils and distributes responsibilities effectively to make this vision a reality. She has successfully developed positive and trusting relationships with parents and the wider community. Governors provide beneficial support and scrutiny, ensuring financial stability and equity.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve provision and opportunities for older pupils to develop and apply their numeracy and digital skills in their work across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders and staff at St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School provide a nurturing and positive climate for learning. They know all pupils very well and ensure that they feel safe, happy and ready to learn.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning and sustain concentration well across lessons. They behave respectfully and contribute to calm, purposeful learning environments within the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are a notable strength, fostering high levels of engagement and motivation.

Overall, most pupils make good progress in literacy and mathematics lessons. Most pupils develop strong oracy and listening skills, contributing thoughtfully to learning conversations. Younger pupils engage productively in a range of mark-making and writing activities, supported by well-planned opportunities to develop fine and gross motor skills. As pupils move through the school, they experience a wider range of writing genres and most older pupils write at length, using language imaginatively, although a few do not present their work neatly. Most pupils' reading skills develop well. Younger pupils read with growing fluency and older pupils become confident readers who enjoy reading for pleasure. They benefit from exposure to good quality literature and demonstrate strong understanding of the texts that they read. Older pupils collaborate with each other effectively to improve their communication skills, for example during literacy activities to enrich vocabulary and improve sentence structure, enhancing their ability to write with precision and creativity. Many pupils show growing confidence in using basic spoken Welsh, although their spontaneous use of Welsh remains limited.

Teachers plan mathematics work progressively across the school and many pupils make strong progress. Younger pupils apply this learning well through practical and outdoor activities. Pupils' digital skills are developing well. Nearly all pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of how to stay safe online. However, teachers of older pupils do not always provide enough opportunities that challenge pupils to apply their numeracy and digital skills to a suitable standard.

The school's assessment systems are robust, giving staff a secure understanding of pupils' needs. They use this information well to support good progress for most learners, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). As a result, most pupils make strong progress over time in many areas of the curriculum, consolidating knowledge and applying skills in new contexts.

Teachers plan a curriculum which is engaging and motivates pupils effectively. This includes a range of authentic learning experiences that promote high aspirations and

provide opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn. Most teachers question effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and provide beneficial verbal feedback which helps pupils to identify next steps. Pupils respond very well to this feedback through their online portfolios and show strong understanding of how to improve their work. Most pupils develop their independence and resilience well, particularly older pupils who use trial and error to succeed in challenging tasks. Staff plan useful opportunities to develop creativity, for example through instrumental music lessons and through construction activities. Staff ensure that pupils benefit from experiences that promote their physical health and well-being, including lunchtime sports clubs led by older pupils.

Spiritual, moral, and cultural development is integrated into the curriculum well. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on their values during assemblies and class discussions.

Spotlight: Planning for the successful inclusion of all pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of diversity. Teachers draw upon the wide range of pupils' experiences to plan a curriculum which celebrates cultures from across the world meaningfully. Leaders ensure that parents and the wider community are able to contribute towards this learning. Staff provide a range of opportunities for pupils from diverse backgrounds to learn about the local history and culture of Wales. This helps them to develop a sense of belonging to their local community.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They know whom to approach if they have concerns and trust staff to respond appropriately. The school promotes pupils' well-being effectively through a caring and inclusive ethos, underpinned by strong relationships between staff and pupils. This contributes significantly to pupils' sense of security and belonging.

Provision for pupils with ALN is strong. Leaders have clear procedures to identify and support pupils who need additional help to learn. Teachers use differentiation and targeted planning effectively to meet individual pupils' needs. This enables them to participate fully in learning and wider school life. Teachers collaborate well with external agencies to enhance provision. Staff adapt learning environments thoughtfully, for example through sensory areas and designated spaces.

Rates of pupils' attendance are good. Recent, focused efforts by leaders have led to improved attendance for pupils with ALN. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to share their views and take on leadership roles, particularly in

older year groups. Pupils engage positively in these activities and demonstrate with enthusiasm how their contributions have influenced school life.

Leadership is a strength. The headteacher provides a clear vision for a nurturing and inclusive environment, placing pupils' well-being at the heart of the school's work. She models high expectations and promotes trust and independence among staff. She has successfully developed positive and trusting relationships with parents and the wider community. Leaders distribute leadership roles effectively. They enable staff to lead on school priorities and contribute meaningfully to monitoring and self-evaluation. As a result, all staff are very clear on the school's improvement priorities and their role in supporting these. Staff access informative training that supports their roles. While monitoring processes are regular and generally robust, they do not always focus sharply enough on developing pupils' numeracy and digital skills.

Governors are highly supportive and hold leaders to account effectively. They have a secure understanding of the school's financial position and scrutinise spending carefully to ensure value for money. The Pupil Development Grant is used well to promote equity. Together, leaders and governors create a strong nurturing ethos.

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:

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 2026: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 29/01/2026