

A report on
Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary
School

Gelliswick Road
Hakin
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 3RQ

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

About Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Name of provider	Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	484
Pupils of statutory school age	359
Number in nursery classes	72
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%)	27.8%
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%)	12.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.4%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.9%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No

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Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/01/2019
Start date of inspection	01/06/2026

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

Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a caring, inclusive school where pupils and their families are at the heart of school life. The headteacher provides strong leadership and, together with staff and governors, has established a clear vision based on high aspirations and inclusion. Leaders and governors work effectively together to improve the school and support pupils' learning and well-being. Because of this, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those adversely affected by poverty, make strong progress from their starting points. Pupils behave well, show positive attitudes to learning and are polite and respectful towards others.

In the youngest classes, stimulating indoor and outdoor environments provide valuable opportunities for exploration and purposeful play. As pupils move through the younger classes across the school, these opportunities are less well developed. Teachers use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to explain their thinking and contribute confidently to discussions. Feedback from staff helps most pupils understand how to improve their work and make progress. In a few lessons, older pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their own ideas and think more deeply about their learning.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills. As a result, most pupils become confident communicators. Reading is a strength, and most pupils develop into fluent readers who enjoy books and read with good understanding. Writing develops well through use of a consistent approach that enables pupils to build their skills progressively across the curriculum. Most pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning Welsh; however older pupils do not make enough progress in developing their speaking skills.

The school provides a broad and engaging curriculum that helps pupils develop a strong understanding of their local area, Pembrokeshire and Wales. Effective provision for pupils with ALN, including the specialist resource classes, enables nearly all pupils to make very good progress. Strong partnerships with families and external agencies support pupils' well-being, engagement and attendance successfully.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their ideas and make purposeful decisions about their learning
- R2 Improve pupils' speaking skills in Welsh

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Gelliswick Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a caring and inclusive school where pupils and their families are at the heart of the school's work. The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and, together with staff and governors, has established a clear vision based on high aspirations, inclusion and support for all learners. Consequently, the school has developed a strong sense of community where nearly all pupils feel safe, valued and respected.

Many pupils begin school with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), and those adversely affected by poverty, make strong progress from their individual starting points. Nearly all pupils behave well, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and show respect towards adults and their peers. They are polite, welcoming and proud of their school.

Staff establish positive relationships with pupils and create calm, purposeful learning environments where most pupils engage well in their learning. Teachers and support staff know pupils well and use this information purposefully to provide appropriate support and challenge.

In the nursery classes, staff create stimulating learning environments and use indoor and outdoor areas effectively to support pupils' learning and development. However, opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas and make choices about their learning are not developed consistently as pupils move through the younger classes.

Most teachers use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to explain their thinking, justify their ideas and participate confidently in discussion. They provide useful feedback that helps pupils understand how to improve their work. In a few lessons, particularly for older pupils, teaching approaches are overly complicated. This limits opportunities for pupils to think deeply about their learning, develop their own ideas and improve the quality of their work.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Adults model language effectively and provide worthwhile opportunities for discussion, collaboration and reflection. Consequently, pupils develop strong oracy skills as they move through the school. By Year 6, many pupils listen attentively to the views of others, build thoughtfully on ideas and challenge opinions respectfully.

Generally, pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. Younger pupils respond confidently to familiar instructions and language patterns and use simple Welsh appropriately during classroom activities. As pupils move through the school, they do not make enough progress in developing their Welsh speaking skills.

The school's systematic approach to reading supports most pupils to become confident readers and make strong progress from their starting points. Younger pupils develop secure knowledge of letter sounds and acquire the skills they need to access texts successfully. As they move through the school, most pupils read fluently and with good understanding. Attractive reading areas, carefully matched texts and initiatives such as reading cafés, encourage positive attitudes towards reading. Many older pupils talk enthusiastically about books, authors and their enjoyment of reading.

The school has developed a consistent approach to the teaching of writing that supports pupils to develop their skills progressively across the curriculum. From an early age, pupils gain an understanding of the purpose of writing and begin to apply their emerging skills effectively in meaningful contexts. Most pupils build successfully on these early foundations and plan, draft and improve their work confidently. When given the opportunity to write more independently, older pupils write at length and with growing sophistication. The school's 'Rainbow Writing' framework supports pupils well in developing their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their mathematical and numeracy skills. Younger pupils develop secure number skills and older pupils increasingly apply their

understanding in practical and real-life contexts. Staff are beginning to strengthen opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across the curriculum through purposeful links between mathematics and other areas of learning.

Following recent improvements to provision, many pupils develop their digital skills well and use them confidently to support their learning. Older pupils apply coding, presentation and data-handling skills successfully and most pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online.

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects the principles of Curriculum for Wales appropriately. Staff provide a range of engaging learning experiences that help pupils develop a strong sense of Cynefin. Pupils gain a good understanding of their place within the community through learning about their local area, Pembrokeshire and Wales.

The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development effectively and provides valuable opportunities for reflection. Consequently, many pupils discuss moral issues thoughtfully and demonstrate respect for people with different beliefs and backgrounds. The school is beginning to strengthen opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and the experiences of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Provision for pupils with ALN is a notable strength. Leaders have established effective arrangements to identify pupils' needs who may require additional support at an early stage and use assessment information purposefully to plan appropriate provision. A skilled team of support staff delivers a comprehensive range of interventions, adapting provision carefully in response to pupils' progress. The school's nurture classes provide effective individualised support that helps pupils make good progress in their learning and social development. Because of this, most pupils with ALN make strong progress towards their individual targets.

The specialist resource classes (SRCs) provide highly effective support for pupils with complex needs. Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of pupils' individual needs and make effective use of a range of approaches to develop pupils' communication, independence and learning skills. This supports nearly all pupils in the SRCs to make strong progress and engage successfully in their learning.

The school has developed strong partnerships with parents, external agencies and community organisations to help remove barriers to learning and provide valuable support for pupils and families. Initiatives such as family learning programmes and targeted support for improving attendance contribute positively to pupils' well-being, engagement and attendance. Attendance is improving steadily for all groups of pupils and leaders have reduced levels of persistent absence successfully.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of leadership opportunities through pupil voice groups. These groups contribute meaningfully to aspects of school improvement and help pupils develop confidence, responsibility and leadership skills. For example, members of the school's Pupil Senedd work successfully with the headteacher and local authority to improve the dining experience of pupils at the school.

Leaders have established rigorous self-evaluation arrangements that provide an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders, staff and governors engage in a broad range of monitoring activities and use evidence purposefully to evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress and well-being. Professional learning aligns closely with school priorities and supports staff well to reflect on and improve their practice.

Spotlight – Governors at the Heart of the School Community

Governors make an exceptional contribution to school improvement through their close involvement in the life of the school and the wider community. They use their extensive local networks to forge valuable partnerships that enhance pupils' learning experiences while informing self-evaluation and strategic planning. Their regular visits and first-hand engagement provide a strong evidence base for challenge and support, helping to drive improvements such as the successful development of digital learning.

In a relatively short period of time, leaders have implemented a wide range of successful initiatives that have strengthened provision and improved outcomes for pupils, for example in reading. Leaders recognise the need to refine and consolidate aspects of school improvement work to strengthen those elements of classroom practice that have the greatest impact on pupils' learning.

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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