

A report on

St Monica's C.I.W. Primary School

**St Monica's C.I.W. Primary School
New Zealand Road
Heath
Cardiff
CF14 3BR**

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

About St Monica's C.I.W. Primary School

Name of provider	St Monica's C.I.W. Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	English-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales voluntary aided school. 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.
Number of pupils on roll	151
Pupils of statutory school age	132
Number in nursery classes	11
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%)	26.2%
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%)	10.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%

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Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	71.2%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/04/2019
Start date of inspection	08/06/2026

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

St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School is a welcoming and caring school where every pupil is valued. The school celebrates the diversity of its pupils and families, and this supports a strong feeling of respect and belonging. A commitment to the inclusion, well-being and progress of all pupils is central to the values of the school.

Staff know pupils well and build strong, positive relationships which are evident throughout all aspects of school life. Clear expectations for behaviour and learning ensure most pupils engage well in their lessons and behave well around school. Overall, rates of pupils' attendance are good. The school regularly admits pupils who speak English as an additional language throughout the year. Staff support these pupils effectively to settle quickly and make good progress in developing their oracy and reading skills. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those new to English, make good progress across the curriculum from their individual starting points. A wide range of pupil voice groups have a significantly positive impact on school life, enabling pupils to develop leadership skills and take increasing responsibility.

The headteacher provides compassionate and highly effective leadership, supporting staff to work together well to realise the school's vision. This is clearly evident in the nurturing, purposeful culture across the school. During a period of significant disruption at the start of the year, she provided strong leadership to support the well-being and continued progress of pupils, staff and families.

Teachers work well together to plan purposeful and engaging activities and use questioning well to extend pupils' learning. Most teachers provide appropriate challenge and support, though there are occasions when adults over-direct learning and this limits pupils' opportunities to work independently. A consistent whole school approach to the planning and teaching of reading and mathematics supports most pupils to make strong progress in their learning. Many pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh and develop appropriate skills during their time at school.

The governing body has a strong understanding of the strengths of the school and works successfully with leaders, staff, and pupils to support a positive culture of reflection and continuous improvement.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and to work more independently.

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

St. Monica's is a welcoming and inclusive school at the heart of its community. Staff know pupils and their families well and provide high levels of care and support. This ensures most pupils feel safe, valued and develop a strong sense of belonging.

Strong relationships across the school create a calm, purposeful environment that supports learning effectively. A consistent whole-school approach helps pupils to regulate their behaviour effectively. Most pupils behave well, are polite and respectful and have positive attitudes to learning. A strong sense of belonging and high levels of engagement in learning and school life support consistently strong attendance.

Leaders have worked well with staff to develop an ambitious vision for inclusion, nurture, and high-quality teaching. A strong culture of teamwork, shared responsibility and reflection supports staff to realise this vision. They work well together to evaluate the impact of improvement work and a strong focus on professional learning consistently supports improvements in pupils' learning and well-being. Effective engagement with a range of external partners supports sustained improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes. Successful collaboration with local schools has strengthened the development of the outdoor learning environment and opportunities for younger pupils to learn through play.

Teachers and support staff create a positive learning environment where expectations are high. A strong focus on collaboration and professional dialogue supports consistency in teaching approaches. This enables most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those who speak English as an additional language, to make strong progress from their individual starting points.

The introduction of a consistent approach to teaching reading has had a significant impact on engagement and progress. Many younger pupils benefit from well-planned phonics teaching to develop their early reading skills. Most pupils make good progress and by Year 6, they read with fluency and expression and develop a strong enjoyment of reading. Carefully targeted interventions, delivered by skilful and well-trained staff, support pupils who require additional help with their reading skills to make strong progress.

Most pupils develop their writing skills well and write confidently for a range of purposes as they progress through school. A whole school focus has led to improvements in handwriting and presentation, reflecting the high expectations staff have for all pupils.

Effective planning supports most pupils to develop their mathematics and numeracy skills well. Younger pupils develop secure early number skills and enjoy applying them across the curriculum while older pupils work with increasing confidence, using their knowledge of money and percentages to solve complex problems. Most pupils make good progress in developing their digital skills, using a wide range of applications effectively to support their learning across the curriculum.

In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to move learning forward, check for understanding and encourage pupils to explain their reasoning. Most pupils express their views confidently and respond well to effective feedback to improve their work. However, on a few occasions, adults over-direct learning and this limits opportunities for pupils to develop independence and explore their ideas fully.

Teachers carefully assess pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy, and well-being. This comprehensive approach accurately identifies pupils' strengths and areas for development and enables staff to adapt teaching effectively, ensuring appropriate challenge and support.

Teachers plan a broad range of engaging and authentic learning experiences that reflect pupils' interests and the school's diverse community well. Relevant visits, community projects, and strong links with the local church support pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development effectively, helping them to be considerate, reflective, and respectful of others. Access to a wide range of creative experiences enables pupils to develop their creativity effectively, expressing ideas imaginatively through art, music, and drama. Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills, responding positively to questions, answers, and prompts.

Spotlight: Strengthening engagement and pupils' sense of belonging through inclusive practice and pupil leadership groups.

A wide range of pupil voice groups provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life and develop leadership skills, supporting them to grow in confidence and take on responsibilities. These groups make a strong contribution to the inclusive ethos of the school by supporting new pupils to build friendships and develop an understanding of different cultures. Older pupils develop empathy and communication skills effectively through leading well-being activities for younger pupils. Staff plan engaging and relevant learning experiences that explore a range of cultures and perspectives. This supports pupils to develop a strong sense of identity and respect for others.

Provision for pupils with ALN is strong. Staff work together successfully to identify pupils' needs at an early stage and implement a wide range of targeted interventions effectively. Sensitive and responsive in-class support meets pupils' learning, social and emotional needs well. Staff monitor progress closely and adjust support when required. The school works well with external agencies to ensuring that provision is appropriate and responsive. Most pupils with ALN make strong progress towards their individual learning goals and are fully involved in the life of the school.

Spotlight: Supporting pupils new to English to make strong progress through effective teaching and strong partnerships.

Staff create a language-rich environment and consistently model vocabulary well, which supports pupils to quickly develop their oracy skills. They use detailed assessments well to identify needs precisely and adapt provision carefully, ensuring appropriate support and challenge. This strong focus on developing pupils' English speaking skills, combined with effective teaching, helps many pupils who are new to the English language make good progress as readers. Positive engagement with parents and the effective use of technology enhances communication and understanding between school and families. Inclusive and responsive teaching enables pupils to build on prior knowledge, supporting their confidence, well-being, and sense of belonging. This whole-school approach is particularly beneficial for pupils new to English who join the school throughout the year, helping them to settle quickly and make strong progress.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through regular visits to the school. This supports them to provide appropriate challenge and strong support. They ensure that funding and resources are used effectively to improve outcomes for pupils.

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.

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