



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**St Gabriel & Raphael R.C.P. School  
Primrose Street  
Tonypandy  
RCT  
CF40 1BJ**

**Date of inspection: March 2019**

**by**

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

## About St Gabriel & Raphael R.C.P. School

Saint Gabriel and Saint Raphael Catholic Primary School is in the town of Tonypany in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. There are 159 pupils, including 25 who attend the nursery on a full-time basis. The school has six classes, including three mixed-age classes and a nursery class.

The rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 17%. This is just below the national average of 18%. The school identifies 29% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is above the national average of 21%. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes and 18% of pupils have English as an additional language.

The school's last inspection was in July 2012. The headteacher took up her appointment in September 2011.

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

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

Nearly all pupils make good progress in developing their skills as they move through the school. A minority make very good progress in English by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress from their starting points. Nearly all pupils behave very well. Teachers provide stimulating and interesting lessons and most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to learning. Almost all have a positive attitude and are keen to participate in the wide range of activities the school provides. Most develop their personal and social skills to a high standard and show respect and concern for others.

The headteacher provides strong, purposeful leadership and the school has clear values and aims. Staff work as an effective team to maintain a good standard of provision for pupils. There are purposeful opportunities for parents to visit the school and to become aware of their children's learning.

The school has clear systems to evaluate its own performance, to make improvements and to raise standards effectively. It has sufficient resources to meet its requirements, but is in a confined location with limited immediate access to outdoor areas. It deploys resources carefully and uses space skilfully to create a successful environment and ethos for learning. Governors understand and support the school well.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve standards of oracy in Welsh
- R2 Improve the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress when they work independently in foundation phase
- R3 Ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply and to develop their numeracy skills in a variety of topics
- R4 Ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply and develop their data handling skills when using information and communication technology (ICT) as they progress through the school

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

As they move through the school, nearly all pupils make good progress. A minority make very good progress in English by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress from their starting points.

In the foundation phase, most pupils listen attentively to adults and respond appropriately to questions. Most develop their speaking skills well. For example, pupils in Year 2 refer helpfully to illustrations and explain clearly how the tadpoles in their classroom will develop into frogs. Pupils in the foundation phase develop their reading skills effectively and in Year 2 most read with understanding. They pay attention to punctuation and vary their tone and pace appropriately when reading aloud. Most pupils in Year 2 write for various purposes well, such as writing poems using rhyming words, a diary entry, or writing an alternative version of The Three Little Pigs. Most use basic punctuation successfully to organise their work into sequences of sentences. Many shape their letters correctly, although a minority do not distinguish clearly enough between capital and lower case letters when writing.

Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have good listening skills and speak confidently and clearly in class. Many Year 4 pupils talk enthusiastically about figures they have studied from Victorian history, such as Florence Nightingale or William Morris. Most pupils with English as an additional language make strong progress. For example, in lessons in Years 5 and 6, they join in and lead class discussions about mythical creatures confidently. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 make good progress developing and using their reading skills. Many use thesauruses and internet searches effectively to learn about new words or topics and make suitable use of non-fiction books to find information. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 talk enthusiastically about their class novel, 'Friend or Foe' by Michael Morpurgo, and recollect favourite scenes clearly. Most pupils in key stage 2 write lists of facts and instructions in appropriate ways and label diagrams in their books correctly in various tasks. Most learn to write extended pieces and experiment with different styles of writing effectively, such as when writing persuasive letters. Many pupils develop their ability to record their scientific experiments well and make predictions and describe their methods and conclusions. They can explain what is necessary to make a fair test and Year 6 pupils explain the scientific variables in their experiments correctly. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils write in legible, joined handwriting.

In the foundation phase, most pupils from a very young age use correct Welsh language patterns to answer the register and to indicate their lunch time choices confidently. By Year 2, most pupils respond correctly to questions about themselves. They count to twenty, know their colours and recall familiar songs well. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils answer basic questions about their hobbies and describe their families using simple words and phrases. Many read from a suitable range of texts with good pronunciation and sound understanding. With support, most older pupils write for a range of purposes with increasing accuracy. However, in key stage 2, pupils' oracy skills in Welsh are too limited.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In the foundation phase, most learn to count correctly and many begin to apply their numeracy skills in their learning. For example, Year 1 pupils, in their lessons about growing food, know how to sort and count potatoes and measure carrots with rulers to give their answers in centimetres. Most Year 2 pupils make good progress in learning to add and subtract and they develop a good understanding of place value. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils apply suitable strategies, using the four rules of number, to solve problems. They develop a good understanding of measurements and use different units appropriately to time and weigh or to calculate profit and loss in their mathematics lessons. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills across the variety of subjects and tasks they undertake as often or as well as they could.

As they move through the school, many pupils develop their skills in ICT well. In the foundation phase, many use tablet computers readily to photograph and record their activities and to view media files. They use drawing apps successfully to create and colour pictures. Year 2 pupils collect information, such as their classmates' favourite flowers, and use simple graph-making programmes to record their findings. As pupils move through the school, most develop their skills to research on the internet and they extract and relocate images and information competently. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use word-processing packages confidently to re-draft, illustrate and present their written work. They use quick access codes to embed media files in their work effectively. However, in key stage 2, pupils' ability to present data using graphs or charts in different forms is limited. Their ability to use electronic spreadsheets to analyse and present information is also underdeveloped.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Most pupils have a positive attitude and enthusiasm for learning. In classes, almost all pupils are attentive to their teachers and are eager to do well. In the foundation phase, most pupils are keen to take part in the full variety of tasks provided. They are beginning to make choices as they move from one activity to another. In key stage 2, most pupils work together very effectively. They collaborate well when working in pairs or groups. Most have a constructive approach and enjoy working in teams.

In lessons, and when moving around the school, nearly all pupils' behaviour is consistently good. The school site is a confined area with limited outdoor space. Of necessity, pupils of mixed ages often play together in close proximity on the playgrounds. They do this happily and nearly all share spaces fairly and play football safely at allotted times. Most use other equipment with careful consideration for each other and for younger pupils. Pupil 'Playground Leaders' have devised ball games that pupils can play safely in circular groups in the available space and many pupils of mixed ages join in enthusiastically.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. They enjoy and look forward to their playtimes and school activities. They are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of eating healthily. Pupils of different ages talk knowledgeably about sensible food choices and many bring fruit to school for healthy snacks. Many pupils in key stage 2 can explain the benefits of a

balanced diet clearly. Before school, as part of their breakfast club activities, the younger pupils use the school hall and older pupils the outdoor spaces for energetic activities. All pupils in key stage 2 complete a 'daily mile' during afternoon break. This is a structured activity offering progressively challenging levels of participation. Most are aware of the importance of physical activity and explain correctly why their daily mile benefits them. Many speak enthusiastically about different sports they enjoy in school, particularly football, in which all pupils are free to participate.

Pupils throughout the school take on roles of responsibility purposefully. Many speak with interest about the range of leadership roles available to them, including Criw Cymraeg, digital leaders, the sports and school councils, and eco-committee. All these pupil voice groups come together in one senedd to discuss each others' ideas and to challenge decisions. They report back to their classes regularly and pupils also produce their own school newspaper to keep all informed. As a result, many have a strong awareness of what their representatives do and how they contribute to school life. For example, many know the eco-council is responsible for the fitting of automatic taps in school toilet areas to minimise the waste of water and to save money.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. They relate positively to visual displays and fellow pupil 'attendance officers' who record the attendance of each class. Attendance rates are generally strong, but there was a significant drop last year.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

The school provides a broad topic-based curriculum that gives pupils a wide variety of stimulating learning experiences. This contributes effectively to developing pupils as confident and healthy learners. Pupils have opportunities to develop their physical skills well in the nursery where they improve their confidence using a range of large outdoor toys and bicycles. As pupils move through the foundation phase, teachers plan purposeful opportunities for them to choose themed activities, such as a cafe role-play area, sorting and counting food items or planting and growing of seeds. Teachers plan a range of carefully structured adult-led opportunities that develop pupils' early literacy and numeracy skills effectively.

Nearly all support staff work well with individuals and groups of learners to ensure that they remain focused in continuous and enhanced learning areas. There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and independent learning activities. Teachers use the available outdoor space well in order to enhance pupils' learning experiences. However, the delivery and monitoring of various activities that pupils have chosen themselves are not always as effective as they could be. This limits the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

In key stage 2, the curriculum develops well from class to class. Teachers introduce new themes and topics in exciting and stimulating ways and they organise interesting educational trips and visits. For example, Year 4 pupils visit the local library to take part in a Harry Potter event to encourage reading for pleasure and to introduce them to new authors. This captures pupils' interest successfully. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 begin learning about the water cycle by visiting the Brecon Beacons to carry out a river study. Teachers ensure that there are plenty of interesting, practical tasks for

pupils to have purposeful, hands-on experiences. They provide many beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy and written communication skills. However, teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to apply their number skills in the rich variety of projects that pupils undertake. Teachers plan and prepare for progression in pupils' ICT skills effectively when it relates to their use of words and images. However, there is not enough focus on developing pupils' use of spreadsheets and number-based programmes to present and analyse data.

As part of a creative project in partnership with other schools, teachers develop a range of approaches to teaching expressive arts effectively. For example, pupils work with a visual artist and a dancer to explore the story 'Whose Afraid of the Bwgan Wood'. As a result, these lessons enhance pupils' awareness of different creative approaches well.

Planning to promote pupils' understanding of the traditions and culture of Wales is effective. The school gives pupils a wide range of opportunities to celebrate the lives of famous local people, such as the playwright Frank Vickery, the rugby player Cliff Morgan and contemporary celebrities, such as Ioan Gruffudd. Teachers arrange for pupils to learn about the heritage and history of Wales through productive visits to Big Pit, Cardiff Castle and Caerleon. Many pupils throughout the school demonstrate positive attitudes towards the culture of Wales and its language. However, the provision to develop pupils' Welsh oral skills is varies too much between classes.

Nearly all teachers deliver lessons at a suitable pace. Staff nearly always explain the learning objectives carefully in lessons so that pupils are clear what they must do to succeed. Teachers give pupils regular feedback on their work and pupils respond and improve their work by revisiting identified areas. This is particularly effective in key stage 2 where teachers, in their written feedback and individual discussions with pupils, apply consistent methods to help pupils focus on how they can improve their work.

Throughout the school, teachers deploy learning support assistants successfully. All staff work together well to provide valuable and effective support for targeted groups and individuals. Working relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and productive.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is a caring and inclusive community with strong levels of respect, trust and co-operation between staff, pupils and parents.

The school provides many beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and cultural awareness. Pupils participate in community events, such as the Passion Play in the local church, and this promotes and builds pupils' social skills successfully. The 'Cryw Cymraeg' helps to promote the importance of the Welsh language enthusiastically. It has developed its own area in the school where pupils can read books about Wales and learn Welsh vocabulary. Staff ensure that pupils make purposeful decisions about what and how they learn. For example, they decide on the focus of their work with visiting artists in creative dance and art projects. Pupils support extra-curricular activities well. These include the eco and Welsh clubs, the football and netball clubs and the choir.



There are effective arrangements for the early identification of pupils who require further support. Staff monitor and assess pupils quickly and provide timely and purposeful support through numerous intervention programmes. Leaders use a detailed system for tracking the progress and wellbeing of all pupils as they move through the school. Teachers use this information well to plan relevant lessons for groups and individuals according to their needs. These targeted sessions help to ensure that nearly all pupils make strong progress. Leaders measure the effect of support and intervention programmes regularly. They work closely with a wide range of specialists, including educational psychologists and an emotional literacy support officer, to plan suitable programmes, when necessary.

Foundation phase staff have a clear understanding of each individual pupil and monitor and track their development of specific skills well. Teachers encourage all pupils to develop a positive mindset when facing challenges. Visits by specialist providers promote pupils' personal wellbeing effectively by developing their individual thinking and concentration skills, for example through yoga and meditation.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and for pupils to take suitable levels of physical activity. It provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including online, and how to follow a healthy lifestyle. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school shares important information with parents well, including by newsletters, social media and texts. The headteacher and staff are accessible and helpful, and the school has an open-door approach that enables staff to respond to parental concerns quickly. Staff have appropriate working relationships with parents and offer them a beneficial range of opportunities to take part in school life. For example, the school organises valuable workshops that enable parents to understand how pupils reading skills develop, what the school does to support reading and how parents can help.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher provides strong, supportive and purposeful leadership. She has a clear vision for the school based securely on raising standards and ensuring the wellbeing of all pupils. The headteacher, supported skilfully by her deputy, sets high expectations and communicates these successfully to all members of the school community. Teachers and support staff work well together and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which they fulfil diligently and effectively.

There are purposeful, thorough arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. Robust monitoring systems, together with effective training and support programmes, have a positive impact on improving the school's provision. Senior leaders undertake a wide range of self-evaluation activities that help them to identify the school's strengths and areas for development successfully. These include analysis of performance data, scrutiny of pupils' work and listening to learners and parents. Leaders use the outcomes of the self-evaluation process effectively to set relevant improvement priorities.

The school improvement plan focuses well on addressing school and national priorities for improvement. Leaders monitor progress in meeting priorities effectively. They have a good track record of securing improvements. For example, the school has improved the provision for literacy and has raised standards in pupils' oracy, reading and writing skills over recent years. However, plans to improve provision for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and to improve their Welsh language skills have not fed through fully in terms of improved pupil outcomes.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and know the community it serves well. Governors have a sound understanding of the day-to-day work of the school and its priorities for improvement through detailed reports from the headteacher and regular learning walks. They have a clear understanding of their roles and discharge their responsibilities effectively. For example, they monitor expenditure very carefully to ensure the efficient use of resources. Their role as critical friends of the school is developing appropriately.

The school's performance management systems support the professional development needs of staff effectively. All staff benefit from relevant training and development opportunities, which have a positive impact on their practice and on outcomes for pupils. For example, recent training to ensure a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour is contributing well to the respectful relationships that exist between all members of the school community. Leaders organise purposeful opportunities for teachers to share good practice. For example, teachers work with staff from local schools to plan science activities and creative arts projects.

The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, manages the school's budget effectively to support improvements in the quality of provision. The school has a sufficient number of qualified staff to deliver the curriculum and to ensure pupils' wellbeing. Leaders deploy teaching assistants purposefully to provide effective support to individuals and specific groups of pupils. The pupil development grant supports pupils eligible for free school meals purposefully by providing intervention programmes to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, most identified pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points. Teachers make the best possible use of the limited space available within and outside the school building. They assign and schedule every area carefully and use space creatively to enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, by allocating outdoor space imaginatively, the school facilitates opportunities for pupils to use willow to create an exciting covered learning area.

## 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))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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