



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

A report on

Christ The Word Catholic School

**Cefndy Road
Rhyl
LL18 2EU**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Christ The Word Catholic School

Name of provider	Christ the Word Catholic School
Local authority	Denbighshire
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	All age
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	781
Pupils of statutory school age	684
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	51
Number in sixth form (if applicable)	-
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 20.4%)</i>	46.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 21.5%)</i>	26.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	10.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	-
Start date of inspection	16/05/2022
Additional information	

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.

Overview

Staff at Christ the Word Catholic School are committed to creating a caring environment underpinned by its Catholic values. They have worked hard to help pupils settle back into school life following periods of lockdown. Despite this commitment, leaders are not proactive enough in addressing issues related to the well-being and safeguarding of pupils and arrangements to keep pupils safe need to be strengthened.

Many pupils are happy to be at school and move between lessons calmly, they are polite and courteous to visitors and are keen to share their views. They begin to explore their spiritual beliefs and develop empathy, respect and compassion for others.

Leaders have not done enough to ensure that high quality teaching and learning are at the heart of the school's work, and they do not have a strategic overview and vision that focuses sufficiently on pupils' learning and progress. Across the school, teaching is not effective enough in challenging pupils to do their best and develop as enthusiastic, inquisitive learners. As a result, many pupils across the age range do not make sufficient progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and they often plan tasks that keep pupils busy but do not support their learning.

The evaluation of classroom provision has not been effective. Leaders do not focus closely enough on the impact of provision on pupils' learning and as a result they have an overly positive view of the school's work. Overall, leaders have not been effective enough in improving important aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of classroom provision and its impact on pupil progress.

Leaders do not have a strategic approach to curriculum design and delivery and therefore pupils are not provided with a suitable depth and breadth of learning experiences. Furthermore, the planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills is not cohesive or effective enough. As a result, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills throughout the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen safeguarding arrangements and address the concerns identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve leadership at all levels, including leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils of all ages and abilities make strong progress
- R4 Ensure that the curriculum provides pupils of all ages with broad, balanced and relevant learning experiences
- R5 Strengthen the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

A few pupils across all ages recall prior learning suitably. They apply this to new contexts and make appropriate progress in their learning. However, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) make limited progress in lessons and do not develop their knowledge, understanding or skills well enough. In most cases this is due to the quality of teaching.

Many pupils sit quietly in lessons and a minority offer basic responses when they are asked questions. A very few pupils articulate their opinions well, for example when Year 7 pupils answer questions about the historical reasons for the colonisation of India. The majority of pupils offer only brief and underdeveloped verbal responses. This is mostly because they are not challenged well enough to improve their responses by their teachers.

In the foundation phase, pupils begin to associate the sounds that different letters and letter combinations make. A minority of pupils read short and simple texts suitably and extract basic information from them, for example when Year 5 pupils identify the key features of Egyptian civilisation. Overall, across the school, pupils' reading skills are underdeveloped. Too many pupils of all ages do not use a broad enough range of reading strategies well enough to support or improve their learning.

A very few pupils across the school produce well-structured writing and organise their work appropriately. These pupils use a suitably broad range of vocabulary to engage their audience. Overall, pupils do not have the opportunity to write at length independently, often enough, in all subjects across the curriculum. As a result, too many pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped, and they make many basic errors in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. The majority of pupils generally produce short and simplistic pieces of writing. This is largely due to over-reliance on worksheets or repetitive tasks that do not build well enough on pupils' prior learning and experiences.

A minority of pupils have a suitable grasp of place value and the four rules of number and use these appropriately to perform simple calculations. Overall, pupils make limited progress in mathematics, and this hampers their ability to apply these skills in other subject areas. When given the opportunity, the majority of pupils can construct a suitable range of graphs, although they rarely analyse these sufficiently.

In a very few cases, younger pupils make suitable progress in their ability to communicate in Welsh. However, pupils' Welsh language skills are limited. A few are beginning to develop their thinking and creative skills, but they do not get sufficient opportunities to develop or apply these skills across the age ranges.

The majority of pupils develop a limited range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils produce animations to tell the story of 'Mr Gumpy's Outing'. Overall, pupils' ability to use more advanced ICT skills is underdeveloped due to the lack of suitable opportunities afforded to them.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Many pupils are happy to be at school with staff and friends. They move around the school calmly and behave appropriately at break and lunch times. Many pupils feel safe in school and say that they are free from bullying. They know who to go to if they have a problem.

Many pupils are compliant in lessons and a few show enthusiasm and interest in their learning in response to teaching that stimulates their engagement. Only a minority sustain concentration during lessons and a majority of pupils are allowed to remain indifferent and passive in their learning. Due to weaknesses in teachers' questioning, a majority of pupils are reluctant to participate in discussions about their learning and only give very brief responses. Pupils do not approach their learning with curiosity and inquisitiveness and do not develop their resilience and determination sufficiently. This is mainly because teaching does not encourage them to do so. A minority of pupils are not punctual to lessons, and this hinders their learning and disrupts that of others.

Opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are limited. Consequently, only a very few pupils return to pieces of work to improve them.

Most pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and are enthusiastic about sharing their views about their school. A majority are keen to participate in a range of extracurricular activities. However, pupils do not develop leadership skills well enough due to limited opportunities. Currently, the school does not have pupil governors or an active school council.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Teaching and assessment have insufficient impact on pupils' learning. In a few instances, teachers plan suitably engaging sequences of activities and lessons that are tailored appropriately to pupils' individual needs. These teachers know their pupils well and use this understanding to inform their planning. However, shortcomings in teaching across the age range restrict the progress that pupils make in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Many lessons are characterised by low expectations of what and how much pupils can achieve. In these lessons, teachers plan too many undemanding tasks, such as colouring in or completing wordsearches. In general, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to develop their independence and resilience, for example by overly directing activities or being too quick to intervene. This means that pupils are unable to take responsibility for how they go about attempting tasks. Too often, teachers use resources that restrict pupils' progress, for example by limiting their ability to write at length. They do not use questioning well enough to develop pupils' thinking.

In a minority of lessons, teachers provide appropriate verbal feedback that helps pupils to understand how well they are doing. In a few instances, they set helpful targets that enable pupils to make suitable improvements to their work. Overall, assessment strategies have too little impact on pupils' progress. Teachers either write excessively lengthy comments to which pupils do not respond meaningfully, restrict their comments to the presentation or completion of tasks, or excessively praise modest work. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress or that of their peers are generally not well planned and do not help pupils to improve. Teachers across the curriculum do not use feedback strategies well enough to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The school does not provide pupils with a suitably broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. It does not offer them an appropriate variety of learning experiences that are focused on meeting pupils' needs. In the lower school, teachers use a topic-based approach to deliver a range of areas of learning. The outdoor areas provide suitable opportunities to enhance the provision for younger pupils. However, too often, these pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to make choices about how and what they learn. Whilst the school provides suitable information to pupils to help inform their subject choices, arrangements in Year 9 hinder pupils' ability to make informed choices at the end of Key Stage 3. This is because pupils do not study a broad enough range of subjects throughout the year.

In the foundation phase and in Key Stage 2, teachers take suitable account of the need to develop pupils' early literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills is weak across the school. Strategies are not sufficiently well planned or co-ordinated. As a result, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to develop their skills meaningfully in relevant contexts. In addition, they do not have regular enough opportunities to study personal and social education. As a result, pupils have too few opportunities to develop, for example, their own values and opinions.

Provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills across all age ranges is not extensive or strategic enough. As a consequence, most pupils do not make suitable progress in their Welsh communication skills.

Care, support and guidance

The school cares for its pupils and is committed to improving their personal development and well-being in keeping with a strongly-held Catholic ethos.

The school is beginning to establish a culture of safeguarding and, generally, staff are aware of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. This includes working with a range of partners to address concerns about the well-being and safety of pupils. However, leaders are not sufficiently proactive in addressing issues related to the well-being and safety of pupils. In addition, the process of reporting and recording safeguarding concerns is not sufficiently rigorous and does not always provide important information about actions taken to protect pupils.

All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. However, staff do not have a strong enough understanding of the responsibility they have to protect pupils from

the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Overall, arrangements to keep pupils safe do not meet requirements.

Across the school there are suitable opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual beliefs and develop empathy, respect and compassion. The school is an inclusive community, which welcomes a diverse range of pupils from all backgrounds and faiths. There are regular opportunities for pupils to participate in charitable activities that benefit the local community and wider world, for example collections for local food banks. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to celebrate their Welsh culture or to explore wider ethical considerations.

The strong, trusting and caring relationships between staff and pupils ensure that, generally, the school deals with incidences of bullying swiftly. In a few instances, the school does not deal with pupils' concerns well enough.

Procedures to monitor and track the progress of pupils with ALN are sound. This includes a valuable focus on pupils with ALN who are also eligible for free school meals, have English as an additional language or are looked after. Pupils with ALN, particularly those who access specialist provision or interventions, receive suitable support for their educational and well-being needs.

There are very few opportunities for pupils to take on leadership responsibilities and to contribute actively towards the development of the school community. Those opportunities that do exist, for example the 'Criw Cymraeg' or 'Healthy Heroes', are at a very early stage of development. There is an appropriate range of extra-curricular clubs including a variety of musical, artistic, and sporting activities, which provide opportunities for pupils to contribute creatively and to work as part of a team.

The school has appropriate links with partner organisations to guide pupils with their next steps, including local colleges and Careers Wales. Pupils are supported to continue into further education or to move directly to employment through apprenticeships, including placements at the school itself.

Leadership and management

Leaders in Christ the Word Catholic School have developed a clear vision, guided by the Catholic ethos, that focuses predominantly on caring for pupils. This was particularly the case during periods of lockdown. However, they have not produced any strategic approach to develop pupils' learning, knowledge and skills. This has contributed to significant shortcomings in teaching and limited pupil progress. In addition, leaders have not secured sufficiently robust safeguarding processes or developed a coherent vision for the Curriculum for Wales.

The implementation of a comprehensive plan to restructure staffing has been delayed because of the pandemic. Currently, too many leaders do not understand and discharge their roles appropriately, and there is an overall lack of clarity regarding the specific aspects for which they are responsible. This has resulted in much of their work being ineffective.

Senior leaders do not hold middle leaders to account well enough. The absence of appropriate support and challenge hinders the development of middle leaders, most

of whom are unable to evaluate well enough the quality and impact of provision, particularly teaching, in their areas of responsibilities.

Since the pandemic, the school has restarted its self-evaluation processes, but it remains the case that there is no meaningful consideration of the impact of provision on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Although leaders observe lessons, mostly as part of the school's performance management process, their evaluations and feedback are not focused on pupils' progress.

Leaders at all levels do not distinguish between the features of teaching and learning well enough, evaluate them with rigour and precision, or triangulate their findings from a reliable range of self-evaluation activities. Consequently, they have not recognised important weaknesses in provision to support the development of pupils' skills or aspects of teaching that are poor. These processes do not enable leaders to identify strengths or areas for improvement clearly or accurately, and do not feed into improvement planning.

Current self-evaluation processes are often unnecessarily protracted and senior leaders mostly offer a very descriptive view of provision that lacks evaluation. Middle leaders are not sufficiently involved in this process. These shortcomings contribute to leaders and governors having a far too positive view of the school, including the quality of teaching and learning, and the impact of leadership. The school's improvement priorities, which middle leaders do not contribute to, are not focused well enough on important shortcomings in provision and leadership. Improvement planning is not precise enough and does not include enough suitably challenging success criteria against which to judge progress.

The school is beginning to develop a range of suitable professional learning activities, including opportunities for staff to share their practice. However, leaders do not plan or evaluate these well enough. Professional learning arrangements are not aligned with the school's processes for line management, self-evaluation or performance management. As a result, professional learning has little impact on improving the quality of teaching or leadership.

Since the school opened, leaders have managed the school's inherited financial commitments successfully. However, leaders do not evaluate grant spending regularly or robustly enough. For example, currently leaders cannot identify the impact of the pupil development grant on improving outcomes for targeted pupils.

The governing body are enthusiastic supporters of the school. However, their observations of the school's work are overly positive and do not help it to improve. They do not fulfil their function as a critical friend well enough. For example, they do not ensure that the school meets requirements for healthy eating and drinking.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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

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

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