

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	28th September 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Gill German / Geraint Davies
Head of Service	Geraint Davies
Report author	James Brown, Jacqueline Chan, Mair Herbert, Ruth Thackray
Title	Christ the Word Catholic School Inspection Report (update)

1. What is the report about?

1.1. To present a report on the support provided to the school and progress made since the core Estyn inspection in May 2022

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To provide an information update regarding Christ the Word Catholic School since the last report presented in January 2023 regarding the work undertaken to improve standards. Background information included in the January 2023 report continues to be relevant, but is not repeated in this update.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. Performance Scrutiny Committee are invited to discuss the details of the report and identify any aspects that they feel require further explanation or clarification.

4. Report details

4.1. Christ the Word Catholic School opened in September 2019 and was inspected by Estyn in May 2022. The report was published on 20th July 2022 and Estyn identified five recommendations.

- 4.2. In accordance with the Education Act 2005, the school was placed in Special Measures by Estyn. The local authority also used its statutory powers of intervention in accordance with the provisions of the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) and [Welsh Government Statutory Guidance Document \(222/2017\) Schools Causing Concern](#) to require the school secure advice or collaborate and to appoint additional governors.
- 4.3. The interim headteacher, Mrs Bernadette Thomas, continues leading the school this September and secondary expertise is provided by the Associate Head Teacher, Mrs Claire Armitstead (Head teacher of Rhyl High School).
- 4.4. There is a comprehensive support plan in place agreed by the school, the local authority, GwE and the Diocese. Support is also provided dynamically to respond to emerging needs identified in the school. Under the current leadership, the school is collaborating with partners on some aspects of the support which is on offer. However, whilst some aspects of support are accepted, many aspects of support that could, in the opinion of the LA and or GWE be impactful, remain under discussion with the school.
- 4.5. Since the core inspection, the school have undergone two monitoring visits by Estyn, one on the last week of the Easter term and one of the penultimate week of the summer term. Estyn have focussed on two recommendations at each visit.
- 4.6. **Recommendation 1: Strengthen safeguarding arrangements and address the concerns identified during the inspection.** At Easter, Estyn found that real progress has been made in this recommendation and in the Summer that the school have maintained the focus and rigour in keeping learners safe. The school are clear about the areas to continue developing, including the strategic use of data to monitor attendance, and there is a programme of support to improve behaviour. A different member of staff is now leading this recommendation and additional support and guidance is being provided by the LA. All partners recognise the need to support behaviour; support is available to the school from the LAs Behaviour Support Service, and this priority is intrinsically linked to the quality of teaching and learning (Recommendation 3).
- 4.7. **Recommendation 2: Improve leadership at all levels, including leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.** This has not yet been

monitored by Estyn, however considerable work has been undertaken in this area. Since the core inspection, changes have been made in terms of the Chair of Governors, appointment of interim Headteacher and two days' support of Associate Headteacher, interim deputy and other roles leading on aspects of the recommendations. The Associate Headteacher has supported some senior and middle leaders in developing aspects of their roles. Responsibilities have recently been re-organised due to new staff in roles.

- 4.8 **Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils of all ages and abilities make strong progress** Estyn's monitoring reports and GWE monitoring reports cite the need for an increased pace in improving teaching and learning. The school continues to be offered a range of support to address weaknesses in planning, delivery and assessment that support partners believe need to be a priority. Support on understanding the role of the adult in the classroom, developing questioning, and understanding pedagogy has been delivered and initial impact can be seen in teachers' engagement with the training. Follow-up support is necessary to embed improved practices. A working party of staff at the school has developed a clear set of expectations for teachers and pupils, which is helping to provide structure and focus in lessons.
- 4.9 **Recommendation 4: Ensure that the curriculum provides pupils of all ages with broad, balanced and relevant learning experiences.** A rapid review and modification to the Year 11 curriculum at Christmas 2022 was undertaken by the school and support partners to address concerns which support partners and LA officers had identified. The impact of these modifications on Year 11 was the provision of a more suitable and aspirational curriculum to meet these learners' needs, from January 2023. Estyn monitored this recommendation in the summer of 2023 and recognised the improved curriculum, whilst also reiterating concerns regarding the curriculum offer this cohort had previously been given and its impact on the learners. With support, the school has re-constructed the curriculum offer for 2023-24 for the upper school, which provides greater curriculum time for a range of subjects, more choice for pupils in Year 9 and fewer non-specialist teaching across all year groups. GwE monitoring activities, and Estyn have also identified concerns over the curriculum in lower school and appropriate support is being offered to address this.

4.10 **Recommendation 5: Strengthen the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills.** As part of the support plan, the school are receiving additional support to develop pupils' skills and this support has recently focussed on literacy and Cymraeg. This recommendation will become a prioritised focus for the school's improvement work in 2023-24, and the school has appointed staff to lead on literacy and numeracy improvements specifically. Support will continue to be offered by improvement partners on literacy, numeracy and Cymraeg development.

5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1 The work undertaken at Christ the Word Catholic School contributes to multiple themes in the Corporate Plan, but in particular, theme 4 A learning and growing Denbighshire. However, the improvements for the pupils in Christ the Word will also contribute towards a more prosperous Denbighshire, a healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire and a Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

6 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 Any additional costs to support the school are being met from existing budgets.

7 What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1 There is no decision or proposal for change required and therefore a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required.

8 What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 This Scrutiny report is an update to the one delivered to Members in January 2023. The school is subject to a Multi-Agency Working group which is attended by the school and Chair of Governors, local authority officers, GwE officers, Lead Member, the Diocese of Wrexham, Estyn and Welsh Government.

9 Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 Funding to support the improvement at Christ the Word Catholic School comes from existing budgets.

10 What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 A school placed in Special Measures is defined as:

“...a school that is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.”

This is the main risk and the Post Inspection Action Plan and agreed support plan is addressing the shortcomings.

11 Power to make the decision

11.1 The [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) and [Welsh Government Statutory Guidance Document \(222/2017\) Schools Causing Concern](#) provides the legislative requirement for local authorities to respond to the Christ the Word Estyn Inspection 2022.

11.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7.4.2 of the Council's Constitution.