A report on

Padre Pio RC Primary

Conway Road
Pontypool
Pontypool
NP4 6HL

Date of inspection: February 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Padre Pio RC Primary

Name of provider	Padre Pio RC Primary
Local authority	Torfaen County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Category 1 – English medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Cardiff. 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	182
Pupils of statutory school age	162
Number in nursery classes	0
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 22.9%)	22.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having	0%

an additional learning need in Primary is 11.1%)	
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2008
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2016
Start date of inspection	17/02/2025

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

Leaders and staff prioritise pupils' happiness and well-being at Padre Pio R.C. Primary School. Pupils feel safe and are polite and respectful to others, and their behaviour is exemplary. Staff develop positive working relationships with pupils, and most pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning.

The school has a thoughtful approach to professional learning, and this has supported staff to improve their practice, for instance in the provision for younger pupils. Staff provide valuable opportunities for younger pupils to explore their interests and develop a sense of curiosity. However, in the older classes there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct learning, which limits pupils' ability to develop their independence. Across the school, staff use questioning and feedback effectively and provide a good level of challenge for pupils. Nearly all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make at least good progress in their literacy, mathematics and digital skills.

School leaders provide strong, considerate leadership and they establish effective links with families. This supports parents to understand the progress their child is making and to play a part in the school's direction. Leaders have implemented national priorities successfully, such as additional learning needs (ALN) reform. However, there has been an insufficient focus on the Welsh language, and most pupils do not develop their skills well enough. Staff develop pupils' physical and creative skills well. Pupils benefit from a range of sporting activities and enjoy learning to play musical instruments.

Governors have a suitable understanding of the school's priorities and have a sound understanding of keeping pupils safe. However, they have limited involvement in gathering first-hand evidence to evaluate the work of the school, such as the quality of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

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

R1.   Develop the independent learning skills of older pupils

R2.   Ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' Welsh skills progressively

R3.   Strengthen the role of governors in self-evaluation and improvement planning to ensure that they provide suitable challenge to the school

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The school provides a welcoming and nurturing environment where pupils and staff feel safe, valued and appreciated. Staff develop positive working relationships with pupils. This creates an environment of mutual respect where pupils feel happy and engage positively with their learning. Staff across the school promote good behaviour and use positive praise frequently. Consequently, nearly all pupils are polite to adults and to each other, and their behaviour is exemplary.

The headteacher and deputy provide strong, considerate leadership. They establish a shared sense of purpose amongst all staff, which supports the development of pupils' learning and well-being successfully. Leaders promote strong teamwork, and all staff share a keen focus on the school's mission, to ensure that pupils grow in the gospel values and achieve high standards. Staff have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that supports pupils' social and cultural awareness well. During their time in school, nearly all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make at least good, and at times strong progress from their different starting points.

Staff promote the use of digital devices to support pupils' learning effectively, and they develop their digital skills progressively. Younger pupils programme floor robots to move around their classroom and visit locations related to fairy tales successfully. As they move through the school, most pupils use their digital skills confidently in their learning, for instance when using artificial intelligence to create images of their descriptions of a dragon.

Across the school, staff are good language role models and promote a love of reading. They provide pupils with a range of authentic opportunities to develop their writing skills across a variety of genres. As a result, most pupils make strong progress in their literacy skills. Many teachers use Welsh regularly to give clear instructions to pupils. However, pupils' responses in Welsh are underdeveloped and the school does not place a suitable emphasis on building pupils' Welsh skills progressively.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematics skills. The youngest pupils have frequent opportunities to count, and they gain a good understanding of place value. By the end of Year 6, most pupils use a range of calculations accurately. Teachers

provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For instance, pupils in Year 4 use coordinates to map star constellations as part of their topic about space.

Leaders demonstrate a thoughtful approach to professional learning. It is informed by the outcomes of self-evaluation activities and is aligned to school improvement priorities well. Leaders have a strong commitment to support staff in their use of research to inform their practice, particularly in relation to teaching. This has led to improvements in provision for the younger pupils, where teaching meets the needs of pupils well. Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for younger pupils to explore their interests, inspire a curiosity for learning and develop their independent learning skills.

Across the school, staff use questioning and feedback effectively to support pupils' understanding of their work. They move learning forward at an appropriate pace and provide most pupils with a good level of challenge. However, in a majority of cases for older pupils, teaching is over-directed, and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to influence how and what they learn. As a result, older pupils do not develop their independent learning skills well enough.

The school has comprehensive systems to identify and support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Skilled support staff use a range of strategies to develop pupils' communication and mathematical skills effectively, and to support their well-being. For instance, staff make timely interventions to support pupils during one-to-one or small group sessions. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN, or those with barriers to learning, make good progress from their different starting points.

Spotlight: Ensuring strong links with families

Leaders and staff develop very positive links with families. They provide valuable opportunities for parents or carers to visit the school, for example during 'book look' days, where parents can look at their child's work or by attending regular class assemblies. Leaders organise purposeful transition events for parents new to the school. These enable most pupils to have a successful start to school life. They communicate regularly with home and ensure that they respond swiftly and purposefully to any concerns or suggestions for improvement. For example, the views of parents and carers have helped inform the school's approach to diversity and anti-racism.

Leaders arrive at the school's improvement priorities appropriately through a range of well-planned activities including looking at pupils' work and observations of teaching. Staff receive valuable feedback that helps them to improve their practice and support pupils' learning well. For example, refining the school's approaches to teaching literacy across the school has led to pupils making improved progress in their reading and writing

skills. Senior leaders build leadership capacity across the school effectively. There are valuable opportunities for aspiring leaders to receive relevant professional learning to improve their leadership skills. This helps staff across the school to develop their leadership roles and have a secure understanding of their responsibilities in delivering school priorities.

Staff provide pupils with a range of opportunities to take on leadership roles, and pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Through the varied leadership groups, they have suitable opportunities to consider impacts of school life and support their local community. The impact of the pupil voice groups on whole-school priorities is developing appropriately.

The school develops pupils' physical skills well. They benefit from regular physical activity during lessons, at break times and in the broad range of extracurricular activities. Staff develop pupils' creative skills successfully, for instance through the range of opportunities to learn musical instruments.

Governors provide appropriate support to the school. They collaborate effectively with leaders to implement national priorities, such as ALN reform and Curriculum for Wales. However, there has been an insufficient focus on developing pupils' Welsh language skills. Governors have a suitable understanding of the school's improvement priorities and are kept up to date through the headteacher's informative reports. However, their involvement in gathering first-hand evidence to evaluate the work of the school, such as the quality of learning, is not regular or strategic enough.

The school has robust systems to monitor pupils' attendance and works closely with external partners to support families in need of additional support and advice. Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of attending school regularly. Despite this, the overall attendance of pupils has been slow to return to pre-pandemic levels.

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/carer 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.

Publication date: 23/04/2025