



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

**A report on**

**Bishop Vaughan R.C. School  
Mynydd Garnllwyd Road  
Morrison  
Swansea  
SA6 7QG**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

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

## About Bishop Vaughan R.C. School

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive voluntary aided school in the Diocese of Menevia. The school serves Swansea local authority and surrounding areas. There are currently 1328 pupils on roll including 256 in the sixth form. The school works in partnership with a neighbouring school to provide sixth form education.

Just less than 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the Welsh average of 17.0% for secondary schools. Around 52% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. The school has 16% of pupils on its special educational needs register which is close to the national average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is 2%, which is also very close to the national average. Very few pupils receive support to learn English as an additional language although a minority come from a minority ethnic background. There are virtually no pupils who speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard.

The current acting headteacher took up her post in September 2016, but has worked at the school since 2006 and joined the leadership team in 2012. The senior leadership team consists of the acting headteacher, two acting deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers, one of whom is acting, and three associate senior leaders. The school was last inspected in March 2012.

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

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School has a caring, inclusive ethos that is based firmly upon gospel values. It is highly successful in developing pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural values, and their sense of community. The school provides valuable support and guidance for all pupils which impacts strongly on their wellbeing, learning and personal development.

Performance at key stage 4 generally compares well with that in similar schools. Around half of pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy, but many make secure progress during their time at the school and achieve appropriate outcomes.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers create an inclusive and positive learning environment. In many instances, teachers' high expectations pervade all aspects of their classroom practice, and this inspires pupils to take pride in their work and develop successfully independence and resilience in their learning.

Leadership at all levels contributes successfully to a shared commitment to achieving the school's aims and ambitions. .

<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 the standard of pupils' numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum, and their use of Welsh
- R2 Strengthen the rigour of self-evaluation and the precision of improvement planning
- R3 Provide robust financial management to address the deficit budget

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Over the past four years, performance at key stage 4 has generally compared well with that in similar schools. Around half of pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy, but many make secure progress and achieve appropriate outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

Many pupils make suitable progress in their lessons. They recall previous learning well such as a strong understanding of the causes of World War I, and develop suitably their understanding of principles and issues discussed in religious teaching.

Many pupils listen to their teacher and to each other with attention and respect. The minority who do not, occasionally miss important information and instructions that would help their learning. Many pupils provide relevant responses to teachers' questions and explain clearly their ideas on topics such as God's love being unconditional and the nature and scope of forgiveness. A few pose pertinent questions to clarify their understanding before providing very well-developed and thoughtful verbal responses.

Many pupils skim and scan both literary and non-literary texts well. This helps them to produce, for example, reasoned explanations about the views of humanists, to explain religious teachings about the sanctity of life, and to explore social attitudes about abortion and euthanasia. Around half of pupils use inference effectively to support their understanding of literary texts. This includes explaining how an officer in Michael Morpurgo's 'Private Peaceful' persuades men to enlist despite the horrors of World War I and how John Steinbeck shapes the readers' feelings towards characters in 'Of Mice and Men'. A few, more able pupils, make sophisticated use of inference and deduction when considering Priestley's creation of tension in 'An Inspector Calls', Shakespeare's presentation of hatred as a destructive force in 'Hamlet', and how Dylan Thomas and Emyr Humphreys respectively discuss their late fathers. Similarly, a few pupils synthesise and analyse confidently information selected from historical sources such as when considering changes to society during the industrial revolution and the motivation for, and origin of, depictions of the life of slaves.

Many pupils produce writing that is technically secure and organised appropriately. They write in a range of formats including newspaper articles on the London riots and formal letters to the headteacher sharing interesting views on the introduction of closed circuit television cameras in schools. A minority of pupils produce sophisticated, discursive essays that consider why God permits suffering and the nature and relevance of forgiveness, linking these effectively to contemporary events. Many pupils make appropriate language choices using subject specific vocabulary such as 'militarism', 'imperialism' and 'nationalism' well. A very few employ impressive phraseology when, for example, defining slavery as 'the notion that one human can possess another and deprive them of their human rights'. A few pupils do not develop their independent writing skills well enough though this is occasionally due to teachers providing too much scaffolding to support them when it is not needed. A minority of pupils continue to make too many basic errors in their writing.

These errors include the confusion of tense and a general loss of control through comma-splicing and the use of subordinate clauses rather than full sentences.

Many pupils demonstrate competent numeracy skills when they are provided with worthwhile opportunities in lessons other than mathematics. They handle basic data appropriately, for example, in creating graphs to illustrate the behaviour patterns of young offenders, wealth distribution in medieval society and World War I recruitment figures. A majority of pupils also use their numeracy skills successfully to solve challenging problems. For example, pupils use a series of numerical clues to solve a murder mystery. However, a minority are less proficient and produce poorly drawn graphs with unlabelled axes and missing units.

Generally, pupils' information, communication and technology skills (ICT) across the curriculum remain underdeveloped. The few opportunities pupils have include simple word-processing of letters home based on 'Private Peaceful' and a research task on the Olympics.

Pupils at key stage 3 use their creative skills well when constructing models of favela to demonstrate their understanding of the effects of poverty on living conditions in Brazil. Key stage 4 pupils design board games based on Welsh tourist attractions as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge.

In 2017, performance at key stage 4 compares favourably with that in similar schools in many indicators. This includes performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, which improved in 2017 following a sharp decline in the previous year. Performance in the capped points score also compares well with that in similar schools despite dipping for the second consecutive year.

In 2017, boys performed better than the previous year in half of the indicators. Although girls' performance fell in most indicators, both boys and girls respectively have done better than their counterparts in similar schools in many indicators over the past four years. In 2017, the overall performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to in 2016 and is better than that of the same group of pupils in similar schools in many indicators.

The majority of pupils have sound vocabulary but lack confidence in speaking or writing Welsh. Only a minority of pupils gain a level 2 qualification.

At the end of Year 11, most pupils continue their education in this school or a college.

The majority of sixth form pupils achieve suitably high standards in their work. They demonstrate enthusiasm, confidence and well-developed subject knowledge. They express themselves clearly and use subject specific vocabulary well. Performance in the sixth form improved slightly in 2017 and remains above the average for similar schools in half of the indicators. In each of the past three years, performance in the indicator that includes three A level grades or equivalent at A\*-A has been secure though that in the other key stage 5 indicators, particularly the average wider points score, has been too variable.

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

Most pupils feel safe in school and believe the school deals effectively with any concerns they have. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the range of support available to them within the school community. They feel that the school provides an extensive range of staff they can approach with any issues that arise, for example, within the valuable 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Aspire' centres.

Pupils contribute maturely to the development of the school through the school council. For example, pupils have participated effectively in the school's decisions on their uniform. Where opportunities arise, pupils take on leadership roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. These pupils play a full part in the life and work of the school, for example as anti-bullying and language ambassadors.

Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous to staff, peers and visitors to the school. Nearly all sixth form pupils show a strong commitment, enthusiasm and a mature attitude towards their studies and to the school community. However, a few pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not engage fully in their learning and their behaviour disrupts the learning of others.

Many pupils understand the importance of a sensible diet and exercise. They value the opportunities to get regular exercise through the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school such as multi sports sessions.

Attendance has been a little lower than expected in the last couple of years. However, the attendance of the few poor attenders has improved well this year as a result of the work of the pastoral support team.

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In many lessons, teachers create an inclusive and positive learning environment that supports pupils' subject understanding and personal development well. They use their detailed knowledge of individual pupils' needs and interests to plan a variety of engaging and stimulating activities that promote progress effectively. These activities build well on pupils' prior learning and are supported by carefully prepared resources.

In many instances, teachers' high expectations pervade all aspects of their classroom practice, and this inspires pupils to take pride in their work and develop successfully independence and resilience in their learning. These teachers are effective in developing pupils' thinking skills and promote strongly their understanding of and empathy with a wide range of ideas and viewpoints. Many teachers give pupils valuable feedback about their progress and set them tasks which enable them to reflect thoughtfully on their learning and make improvements to their work.

In a few instances, however, teaching is not consistently effective enough. In these lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, they plan activities that are insufficiently challenging and this restricts the progress that pupils make. They do not plan a sufficient variety of tasks, which has a negative impact on pupils' engagement. In particular, they rely too heavily on worksheets and booklets that give pupils insufficient opportunities to develop and extend their written responses. In these lessons, teachers do not always manage

pupils' behaviour well enough. They do not give pupils clear enough feedback on how to improve their work or do not monitor sufficiently closely how well pupils have responded to their guidance.

The school plans and adapts its curriculum carefully to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress, personal development and wellbeing.

The school has effective arrangements to help pupils make a smooth transition into Year 7. Pupils from partner primary schools take part in valuable transition activities from Year 4 onwards. These activities help these pupils to develop a range of skills that support their transfer to secondary school well, such as problem-solving and working with others.

At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils are able to choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses. Partnerships with other providers are used beneficially to extend the choices available in the sixth form. There are appropriate arrangements to monitor and review the effectiveness of these partnerships.

The adaptation of the curriculum to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils is a strength of the school. The 'Aspire' programme, for example, provides valuable personalised support for pupils with behavioural issues. This range of provision is successful in securing positive outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

Provision for developing pupils' literacy skills is effective. It is well organised and co-ordinated, and many subject areas provide pupils with a wide range of appropriate opportunities to improve their literacy skills. In a few instances, departments plan an appropriate range of activities to help pupils to develop their numeracy skills. For example, in history, pupils analyse data related to the distribution of wealth in the middle ages, demographic changes in the industrial revolution and rates of recruitment to the army during The Great War. However, overall there is too much variation in the quality, level of challenge and suitability of numeracy tasks across the curriculum. The school identifies clearly those pupils with weaker skills. It provides these pupils with a range of targeted interventions that have a positive impact on the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

There is an effective range of curricular and extra-curricular provision to support the achievement and wellbeing of more able pupils. Links with other providers, such as the local university, are used well to develop the interests and aspirations of these pupils. For example, visiting speakers provide pupils with the opportunity to learn about a diverse range of topics such as genetic engineering, computing and social policy.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop as ambitious, creative and ethically-aware learners. 'Problem-based learning days', for example, enable pupils to develop their thinking and collaborative skills. Activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme develop pupils' team-working and leadership skills, and a range of charity projects supports pupils' empathy and understanding of ethical issues well.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture and heritage. In modern foreign languages, for example, pupils compare the cultures of France, Spain and Wales and identify similarities between the languages. In addition, the 'Clwb Cymraeg' and events such as 'Cariadon Ciw' to celebrate Saint Dwynwen's



Day, support pupils' understanding of Welsh culture appropriately. The school has recently strengthened Welsh language provision suitably. However, in recent years, a minority pupils have not completed a level 2 Welsh language qualification.

The school provides many sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities that cater successfully for a wide range of interests. This includes a variety of clubs, such as the debate club and the 'Book 'n' Brew' reading club, and trips to first world war battlefields, a local radio station and 'Flame', a national Catholic youth gathering. In many of these activities, older pupils provide valuable support for younger pupils. These activities contribute well to pupils' personal and social development.

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

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School has a caring, inclusive ethos and provides valuable support and guidance for pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, learning and personal development.

The school has a comprehensive system for tracking and monitoring pupil progress and wellbeing. This allows the school to identify pupils who require further support and provide a range of useful interventions.

There are strong arrangements for the care, support and guidance of vulnerable pupils, particularly those with emotional, health and social needs. Staff in the onsite 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Aspire' centres provide beneficial support for pupils at risk of disengagement or underachievement. The school monitors closely the behaviour of all pupils which enables them to provide effective support for individuals. There are comprehensive procedures in place for tracking and monitoring attendance across the school. This has a positive impact on the attendance, social development and learning experiences of these pupils.

The school has strong links with a range of health and support services and outside agencies. There are effective systems to track and monitor the progress of pupils with additional learning needs and those who have English as an additional language. The school identifies pupils who require support and provides them with beneficial interventions. Individual education plans and language acquisition plans identify appropriate strategies that help these pupils to make strong progress.

The school communicates effectively with parents, for example through an app that informs them regularly about their child's behaviour and attendance. Worthwhile reports to parents provide valuable information on their child's strengths and useful subject specific targets.

The school is highly successful in developing pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural values, which are fundamental to all aspects of school life. Whole-school assemblies, tutorial periods and visiting speakers enhance pupils' understanding of their culture, the Catholic ethos and their sense of community.

The school council and eco council provide worthwhile opportunities to involve pupils in key decisions about school life. These groups have been active in choosing a new uniform made from recycled materials, introducing more healthy eating options and creating a quiet garden area for reflection. The school offers valuable leadership

opportunities for pupils to become student ambassadors, in areas such as teaching and learning, environment, liturgy and peer support services.

The school has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. It helps pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and understand the impact this has on their wellbeing. There is a comprehensive personal and social education programme to cover key areas of health, including alcohol, drugs, smoking, keeping fit and online safety. It also provides pupils with beneficial opportunities to learn about and understand prejudice and discrimination so that they respect diversity and the rights of others.

Appropriate advice and guidance is available for pupils at key transition points to help them make informed choices about their learning and career pathways.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

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

Leadership at all levels contributes successfully to a shared commitment to achieving the school's aims and ambitions. This has a significant impact on pupils' wellbeing and the standards they achieve.

The acting headteacher provides thoughtful and assured leadership. She embraces and promotes strongly the school vision and ethos to provide an 'inclusive, Christian education for all pupils in accordance with the principles and teaching of the Catholic faith'. This is exemplified, by the way in which pupils are encouraged to reflect on their beliefs and values as well as a wide range of moral and ethical issues.

The acting headteacher is supported well by an extended leadership team. Together, this team promotes a shared sense of purpose and commitment to the school's values and ambitions. Leadership responsibilities are delegated effectively. These arrangements contribute well to supporting staff professional development and to addressing particular priorities such as strengthening pupils' literacy skills and improving the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders promote high expectations. These are communicated clearly, for example, through personalised job descriptions, informative policies, weekly bulletins and team meetings at all levels.

Meetings and briefings are an effective means of sharing information, ensuring the efficient day-to-day operation of the school and regular monitoring of pupils' performance and wellbeing. There are well-defined line management arrangements. Regular meetings between senior and middle leaders focus primarily on teaching and learning, improving the quality of provision and the progress and wellbeing of particular groups of pupils. Actions are identified clearly and progress followed up in future meetings. This approach is contributing well to improving outcomes in many key performance indicators.

The governing body supports and oversees the school's work appropriately. Governors generally have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas

for development. A few provide robust and constructive challenge to the school about particular aspects of its work and performance.

The school has a well-established range of quality assurance processes for gathering first hand evidence. This helps identify clearly strengths and areas for improvement in the quality of provision and the impact of leadership. The self-evaluation report is a detailed and broadly evaluative appraisal of the school's work. The analysis of most performance data is detailed, but a few aspects are not considered well enough, for example, the non-core subjects at key stage 4. In addition, the evaluation of pupils' standards and progress in books and lessons does not focus explicitly enough on the development of their skills. The school improvement plan links closely to self-evaluation findings and sets out clearly the school's priorities. It outlines targets, broad actions and resources suitably. However, success criteria and timescales lack precision.

Most pastoral and curriculum leaders analyse pupil performance data well within their area of responsibility. Many use these analyses to identify clearly strengths and areas for improvement. Middle leaders' improvement plans link suitably to the school's strategic priorities.

Performance management objectives relate directly to the school's improvement priorities and focus primarily on raising standards. This approach helps support individual professional learning as well as providing an effective means to hold staff to account for the quality of their work. While many middle leaders carry out their roles effectively there are a few areas of the school's work where they are not having enough impact such as identifying precisely the aspects of teaching that remain in need of further improvement.

The school has a comprehensive range of professional learning opportunities for all staff to develop their expertise and skills. These include collaboration in evidence-based activity in professional learning groups and coaching triads, and sharing good practice within and across local schools. In addition, a few teachers benefit from undertaking worthwhile school-based enquiry supported by a local higher education institution. The school also contributes to, and staff benefit from, a valuable middle leader programme co-ordinated by the regional consortium. Staff value these activities, which have been successful in improving practice in teaching and leadership.

The school deploys its staff suitably. It uses the available accommodation and resources successfully to create a positive learning environment. Although the school currently operates a deficit budget it has implemented a robust recovery plan that has been approved by the local authority to address this deficit. All expenditure is now monitored carefully and allocated appropriately to agreed priorities. As a result, the school is making suitable progress in reducing its deficit.

The Pupil Development Grant is used extremely effectively to strengthen provision, for example through 'Aspire' that provides specialist intervention for pupils at risk of exclusion within a nurturing environment. This approach contributes well to improving outcomes for particular groups of pupils including those eligible for free school meals.

## 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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