

Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools

School Name: Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi VA

Address Campws Dewi Campus
St Davids
Pembrokeshire
SA62 6QH

Diocese: St Davids

Local authority: Pembrokeshire

Date of inspection: 28th February 2023

Date of last inspection: n/a

School's unique reference number: 668/5900

Headteacher: Mrs Rachael Thomas

Inspectors names: Dr Susan Mitchell and Mrs Abigail Beacon

School context

Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi VA opened in September 2018 on a split site across 3 distinct campuses. The head teacher was appointed in September 2022 and is supported by the strategic improvement team made up of two assistant head teachers and a business, premises and finance manager. The school serves a predominantly rural community, with over 30% of pupils attending from out of the school's published catchment area. The school has a strongly inclusive ethos reflected in its motto 'be joyful, keep the faith and do the little things' well, or 'gwnewch y pethau bychain'. At the time of the inspection there were 622 pupils on roll, 196 in the primary phase, 430 in the secondary phase and 4 pupils who have dual registration. 18.5% of pupils were eligible for Free School Meals and 18.5% of pupils were recorded as having Additional Learning Needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi VA as a Church in Wales school

The school has been through a significant period of change over the last four and a half years. The school was formed from a number of smaller schools, one was an existing Church in Wales primary School. A number of improvements have been made to develop the Christian character of the school, these improvements are starting to become a golden thread, as they are woven through policies and procedures in the school. The school knows and understands its children and community very well.

Established strengths

The school is:

- holistically linked with its community and the cathedral of St David's,
- full of care, warmth and respect for every member of the community,
- supported strongly by members of the clergy during collective acts of worship, and
- there are positive working relationships between pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and the wider community.

Focus for development

Learners would benefit from:

- additional opportunities to develop their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as making connections with other faith communities and people with non-religious world views,
- thematic planning, leading of worship and evaluation of collective worship (by staff and learners) to develop spiritual understanding over time,
- the school striving to ensure that specialists teach Religious Education and that there is a designated classroom so that the learning environment is stimulating,
- school leaders having opportunities to develop leadership skills within a church school setting, and
- stronger processes to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in Religious Education, collective worship and the distinctiveness of the school as a church school so that improvement planning is more precise and effectively planned.

How does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all children?

With very few exceptions, parents have made the conscious choice to send their children to Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi as a result of its good reputation and feel of being holistically linked with its community and the cathedral of St David's. Parents communicate that the links with the Cathedral and local community are valuable to pupils, who in turn feel part of a caring Christian family. All staff demonstrate care, warmth and respect for pupils and each other, this is, in turn, mirrored by pupils. It is noted how positively the previous ESTYN inspection was in October 2022, where the school's ethos was found to be "underpinned by a strong moral compass based on its Christian values which are prevalent throughout the life and work of the school". This is also evident in the school's approaches to well-being and safety, an example of this is how effectively Dewi, the school dog, is cared for as he works on each campus site.

Christian values are clearly expressed and most members of the school recognise the distinctive characteristics of the school's values and identify how they affect their daily lives and achievements. The school have newly developed a set of values which they feel exemplify their specific needs and wants as a community. The school is currently transitioning to these, children in Non campus are eloquently able to talk about the original school values and how they apply to their lives. The specific value of Koinonia – friendship and community, is an addition which has been welcomed wholeheartedly by staff and older pupils.

Children have a good understanding of the Christian heritage of Wales, their cultural development and understanding of other world faiths is developing. The school's longstanding links with Lesotho provide valuable opportunities for children, for example celebrating important events in the Lesotho calendar and visits by pupils and staff. The school is currently fundraising to support the visit of pupils and staff from Lesotho to the school. Learners would benefit from additional opportunities to develop their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith as well as making connections with other faith communities and non-religious world views.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

All members of the school community place value on collective worship, this is most pronounced by children in Non and Aidan campus. All pupils have some understanding of different Christian traditions in worship, mainly related to local Church in Wales practice and to some Christian festivals. Planning for improving pupil's understanding of the Eucharist, it's relevance for practising Christians and opportunities to take the Eucharist are in the very early stages of development.

Collective worship meets legal requirements, it usually includes Biblical material, including teachings about the life and person of Jesus Christ and is linked to the school's key values. Younger pupils behave exceptionally well in the local church, this is a place that is familiar to them. They understand about the

seasons and colours of the church year and took part in worship activities with full enthusiasm. A strong rapport has been built between members of the clergy and the school community in all phases. All children behave well, are attentive and respond to the different elements of worship but are often passive. Learners occasionally contribute to collective worship activities but rarely lead worship themselves. Opportunities for collective singing for older pupils are limited to singing in the Cathedral.

Planning gives a basic structure for collective worship although there is a lack of clarity with how themes develop spiritual understanding over time. There has not yet been any monitoring, evaluation or analysis of the impact of collective worship on the school community by either pupils or leaders in the school. There are some opportunities available to children and staff to pray and reflect, for example in reflection areas in Non and Dewi campuses. There is a comprehensive prayer book and form-time worship support for staff provided by a member of the clergy.

How effective is the teaching of Religion, Values and Ethics?

Nearly all pupils at KS4 study full course GCSE. Teaching in Religious Education lessons is well planned and staff are committed to helping pupils achieve success. There are positive working relationships between pupils and teachers who try hard to support pupils in their learning by circulating well in lessons offering guidance and encouragement. Some lessons could include a greater variety of more stimulating and challenging activities to help pupils keep their focus and concentration such as activities based on reflection and discussion. There are times when open questions would be beneficial in order to extend pupils' verbal responses and deepen their thinking.

Learners have a sound understanding of Christianity and other faiths such as Judaism and Buddhism although there could be further opportunities to discuss and consider in a meaningful way. Pupils may benefit from visiting places of worship of other faiths or to have visiting speakers.

Lessons taught in RE link to the school values which are on display on the classroom wall. There are missed opportunities within the Humanities department regarding schemes of learning e.g. Judaism could be studied along with the Holocaust and World War 2. Coverage of what is being taught is not currently tracked although there are plans for this to start.

There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning such as learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work and pupil voice. This would be beneficial for improvement planning purposes.

Parents/carers would benefit from more communication about their child's progress and learning in Religious Education.

The learning environment is vibrant in the Aidan and Non campuses but the classrooms where RE is taught on the Dewi campus lacks stimulation and would benefit from displays in particular of pupils' work.

How effective is the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The Headteacher is committed to articulating and promoting the distinctive Christian vision of the school, this is seen in assemblies with pupils and in newsletters. The Headteacher is supported by members of the Strategic Improvement Team. They recognise the importance of the values on learners and also on the community although there is some lack of understanding and consistency about the values amongst the pupils.

Leaders ensure that collective worship and RE are informed by distinctive Christian values that contribute to learners' positive attitudes. However whilst worship and RE are based upon Christian values, these values are present at an implicit rather than an explicit level. As a result, whilst pupils recognise the school as a church school, they are not always able to recognise the impact that this has on their spiritual, moral and cultural development.

The school is committed to working with the community e.g. to raise money for those in need such as the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria, local foodbank, uniform 'drop off'. There are positive relationships between the school community and parents/carers. Parents/carers describe the school as a 'family' and as being extremely supportive of pupils and families. The majority of parents/carers feel that the school is built upon Christian values. The clergy are very supportive of the work of the school and lead acts of worship. They constantly promote the school values. Governors are also very supportive of the school and contribute effectively although they are not yet involved in self-evaluation processes.

Self-evaluation processes are insufficiently rigorous and do not always lead to school improvement. Consequently, the school's distinctive character is not fully developed. Whilst leaders provide some support for those in need to fulfil their roles, the improvement strategies are not sufficiently robust to have brought about sustained improvement. Leaders do not always evaluate the effectiveness of teaching effectively e.g. through lesson observations. As a result, improvement planning lacks precision.

Although there is a programme for professional development for staff, there are no opportunities for developing staff and governors as leaders of church schools

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship	YES
The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education (where inspected)	YES