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THE CHURCH
IN WALES

Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report Proforma

St Brides Major Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

Heol-Yr-Ysgol
St Brides Major
Vale of Glamorgan
CF32 0TB

Diocese: Llandaff

Local authority: Vale of Glamorgan
Dates of inspection: 22nd April 2026
Date of last inspection: 15th-16th June 2015
School's unique reference number: 401123
Headteacher: Duncan Mottram
Inspector: Jennie Downes

School context

St. Brides Major Voluntary Aided, Church in Wales Primary School serves the coastal and rural communities of St Brides Major, Ewenny, Ogmere-by-Sea, Corntown, and Southerndown. The school upholds a strong Christian identity through partnerships with St. Bridget's and Ewenny Priory churches within the Llandaff Ministry Area. The English-medium school commits to its Welsh heritage by supporting Welsh-language development and deepening understanding of the unique Cynefin. As an educational setting within a coastal heritage area, the school has maintained Eco-Schools Platinum flag status for over 20 years, with learning closely linked to the local environment. There are currently 216 learners aged 3 to 11 on roll. The catchment area is economically stable, with 4.6% qualifying for Free School Meals (FSM). No learners are currently identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL). The school fosters an inclusive environment, with 9.2% of learners receiving Additional Learning Needs (ALN) support.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Brides Major Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church in Wales school

Caru Dysgu am Oes / Love Learning for Life

‘With Christian values at our core, we nurture tolerance, confidence and compassion within a safe and happy school community. We challenge our children to become future guardians of the world and achieve their full potential.’

St Brides Major Voluntary Aided School provides a bright, warm, and welcoming environment for learning. Governors describe the school ethos as one built on the values of respect and trust. This emphasis ensures that all stakeholders are valued, and, as a result, trust is reciprocated throughout the school, as demonstrated by the open-door policy. The school works diligently to ensure the whole school community works together, challenging one another and collaborating to achieve their full potential. The headteacher emphasises the importance of learning rooted in the school's foundational values, creating a vision that leaves a meaningful ‘footprint’ wherever life's journey takes each individual learner.

Children are nurtured to become responsible ‘guardians’ of the environment, an identity aligned to the Curriculum for Wales' emphasis on 'Future Generation' thinking. The learners’ deepening sense of Cynefin is anchored in an understanding of the importance of environmental stewardship. This is reflected in the school’s Eco-Schools Platinum status, which fosters a strong connection to the local wildlife and natural landscape. Such an interdependent understanding of life is encouraged by a whole-school approach that models the skills of effective leadership. In this way, learners are encouraged to become creative contributors to their school and to be committed to working as part of a wider intergenerational community. The school’s distinctive Christian character is the foundation for learners’ holistic well-being. By fostering an understanding of shared responsibility, positive relationships, and respect for nature, the school encourages collective flourishing and a true ethic of care. This vision seeks to shape learners’ secure self-identity, rooting them in a foundation for life built on Christian values.

Established strengths

- The governors and senior leadership effectively articulate and promote a clear, distinctive vision for the school, rooted in its Christian character.
- The school’s Christian character inspires learners to approach the natural world with wonder and a deep sense of stewardship.

Recommendations

- Develop a cohesive, integrated approach to planning that enhances learners’ religious literacy and pluralistic understanding through a more cross-curricular thematic approach to Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE).

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is meeting the needs of all learners including the contribution of Religion, Values and Ethics to the Christian character of the school

The governors, senior leadership team and staff at St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School form a cohesive team, working in close partnership with St Bridget's Church and the wider community to honour the educational legacy, spanning more than 160 years. Evidence of this shared heritage of school, church and community is visible at the school gate, where the bell tower from the 1867 school site stands as a symbol of the community's longstanding commitment to the local children and their education as part of its Christian mission.

By visiting the church and local landmarks, learners develop a strong sense of ownership of their history and Cynefin. Parents value this foundational sense of belonging and the emphasis on nurturing place-rooted relationships. Senior leaders identify this as an essential foundation for learning and are committed to creating a safe space for academic and spiritual exploration. As such, the school community nurtures learners to become responsible 'guardians' of the environment; an identity aligned with the philosophy of Curriculum for Wales and the Wellbeing of Future Generations.

The children's understanding of the interdependence of life is fostered by a school team that leads by example. Learners are encouraged and inspired to become creative contributors to their school, committed to working as part of a wider intergenerational community. The school's longstanding musical excellence also creates a collaborative bridge to the wider community. An example is in how the school choir provide the music for the Bishop of Llandaff's Christmas Message 2025 and participate in 'Voice in a Million'.

The school's distinctive Christian character is the foundation for learners' holistic well-being, challenging all children to take their place in the world as ambitious, creative, confident and ethical, informed global citizens. By promoting shared responsibility, positive relationships, and respect for nature, the school nurtures collective growth and a genuine empathy for the world. Within this supportive ethos, learners are encouraged to 'own their spiritual journey.' By drawing on role models such as St. Bridget, the school nurtures compassion and empathy through a developing sense of place. This is captured in a child's prayer: 'Help us to be loving and kind just like Bridget's wonderful mind,' which illustrates how children adopt the vision and values as their own.

The theological vision aims to develop learners' confidence and self-identity by grounding learners in core values that foster empathy and compassion, and by helping them recognise their role as 'stewards and guardians of the future' across local, national, and global contexts. The Christian distinctiveness and character are demonstrated through whole-school environmental initiatives and reflected in learning themes, which include the environmentally focused 'Ffrindiau'r Byd.' The focus on 'Caru Dysgu am Oes - Love Learning for Life' ensures the school's vision is fully lived by fostering in learners a spirit of social collaboration and shared responsibility.

The impact of collective worship on the school community

At St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School, Collective Worship is the 'heartbeat' of the school community, a special time when everyone gathers in a thoughtfully created space shaped by the whole school community and the governing body's strategic vision. The school hall features simple, child-friendly Christian imagery, including artwork that reflects the Liturgical calendar and the school's vision and values. The focus table, decorated in white and gold for the Church season of Easter, serves as the focal point. Children participate in the act of lighting a candle, followed by the bilingual call to worship: 'Iesu yw Goleuni'r Byd Jesus is the Light of the World.'

The atmosphere is peaceful and calming. Singing in both Welsh and English blends the meditative and prayerful with a lively, action-based song for the 'sending out'. The children's singing adds a real sense of spiritual presence to the worship. The headteacher explores with the learners the idea of 'true faith' and the importance of remembering and understanding Jesus' words and actions. The biblical verse John 22:25 is presented in a child-appropriate way through the Lego Bible. The headteacher creates a tangible moment of awe and wonder to explain the deeper meaning of 'faith and belief'. During worship, there are opportunities for children to reflect and, if they choose, to sit in a 'prayerful' space. Some are deeply engaged, while others enjoy this time simply as a calm start to the day. Most learners' feedback suggests that Collective Worship is a valued and special part of school life. Learners describe worship as 'good and interesting', noting they enjoy the opportunity to sing and to learn about Jesus, the Bible, Christianity, and other religions.

There is clear evidence of a deep dedication to the natural world throughout the school community, aligning directly with the Christian understanding of stewardship. Through collective worship, children are encouraged to follow Jesus' example by caring for creation. This vision is 'lived out' through learners' spontaneous responses to awe and wonder; for example, one learner recalls with 'wonder' the saving of a 'tiny bird', while another expressed joy in the 'yellow of dandelions.' These moments demonstrate a developing spiritual awareness of 'something greater' than themselves.

This ethos is further strengthened by the 'Britheg Brown' project, a collaborative musical event to raise awareness of the rare High Brown Fritillary butterfly. The project demonstrates how learners become creative advocates for the environment, viewing the natural world as a treasured gift to be protected through compassion, responsibility, and community involvement.

By understanding what it means to live 'like Jesus', learners are challenged to look beyond their own lives and foster deep empathy. This is evident in a very young learner's explanation of a 'lobster' struggling in polluted water. Furthermore, learners write prayers, noting that although local litter may not be 'theirs', they recognise a collective responsibility to protect the world. Such moments enable learners to make

'meaningful links between faith and lived experience', seeing themselves as ethical, informed global citizens.

Ultimately, Collective Worship at St Brides Major succeeds by fostering learner agency. By teaching children to see the sacred in the local landscape, the school ensures that its Christian character provides a firm foundation. The headteacher's vision is for the children to reflect fondly on their time at St Brides as a 'happy, loving time', one that sets them up to 'love learning' wherever life takes them. Children leave St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School not just as learners, but as true 'guardians of the future', equipped with the empathy and moral courage to act.

The effectiveness of Religion, Values and Ethics

At St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School, Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) is in the transition phase from discrete teaching toward a thematic, interdisciplinary approach. This aligns with school improvement priorities to create pedagogical themes rooted in local, authentic contexts. As a Church in Wales school, staff are keen to collaborate with a strong professional RVE network. The school is engaged in dialogue with colleagues from the Church in Wales Education team, the Diocesan Head of Education, and the Local Authority to ensure that focused denominational teaching of Christianity aligns with a thematic, pluralistic approach to RVE.

Parents report that their children enjoy learning stories from Christianity and other religions. Learners share their work on 'The Paradox of Christmas,' in which the deeper Christian message of Advent is explored through metaphor in poetry. In this way, learners investigate and write about Jesus as an 'eternal being'. Many learners agree that being curious and asking questions are encouraged in RVE and that learning about different traditions across the globe provides insight into different cultures.

Older learners enjoy the challenge of critical thinking, for example, comparing the Egyptian, Christian, and Islamic creation myths. In this way, RVE is becoming integrated within the curriculum, encouraging learners to explore the interconnectedness of life. This interdisciplinary approach is exemplified by the younger learners, who investigate the tradition of 'Carnival'. By exploring meaning through celebration, young learners begin to understand that celebration often has religious significance. This is expanded further by learning about Easter and taking part in a special service at the local Priory.

Learners make high-level connections across traditions by investigating the symbolic use of water. This includes exploring the sacred reservoirs in Sikhism, the importance of hand washing as a sign of reverence in some religions, and the baptism of Christians. Such an enquiry led learning extends to exploring non-religious beliefs, including Humanism, and how the symbol of the dove is used across many cultures.

A vital component of the RVE provision is the celebration of lived experience and the exploration of Cynefin. The school actively incorporates its learners' family traditions and personal backgrounds, particularly during significant times such as Eid and Christmas. By developing an understanding of local identity alongside ethnic diversity and the lived experiences of Wales and the wider world, learners develop the empathy required to relate to others effectively. This culminates in the creation of 'Super Symbols' and student-led 'Big Questions,' where the learners connect global concepts with personal identity.

The RVE curriculum at St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School is an area where the school is working collaboratively to balance the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales with the school's Christian mission. The school team are keen to foster a culture of professional dialogue and learner-led enquiry to ensure that learners further develop their religious literacy, thereby promoting the critical and empathetic skills necessary to navigate a pluralistic society. There is a commitment to ensuring that through RVE and the study of diverse perspectives, learners are empowered to act as ethically informed citizens within their community and the wider world.

The effectiveness of the leadership of the school as a Church school

The leadership team and governors of St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School have established a strategic, theologically rooted, and highly visible Christian vision: 'Caru Dysgu am Oes - Love Learning for Life.' This vision is deeply authentic to the school's unique Cynefin and provides a robust foundation for both academic and spiritual growth. The vision is clearly communicated and understood by stakeholders, ensuring the school's identity as a Church school is lived out through daily practices and long-term strategic planning. Central to this vision is a focus on environmental stewardship, reflecting the school community's commitment to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. The school leadership team has successfully bridged the gap between global awareness and local action, empowering learners to see themselves as 'Guardians of the Future.' This agency is developed through a curriculum that challenges learners to lead and advocate. Older learners engage with complex ethical issues, such as the environmental impact of palm oil, through the 'Size of Wales' rainforest initiative. Simultaneously, local conservation is prioritised; during Wales Nature Week, learners advocate for the rare High Brown Fritillary butterfly, a rare species of local significance found in only one Welsh location. An intergenerational approach ensures that the theological concept of 'stewardship of creation' is practical, local, and measurable.

The school's forward-thinking infrastructure further embeds the school's vision in the social fabric of village life. A primary example is the strategic development of the school hall, which functions as both a central hub for school life and a welcoming communal space for the wider church and local community. This physical asset

symbolises the school's role in what the headteacher describes as the 'beating heart' of St Brides Major, fostering social cohesion and shared purpose.

Governance is a key strength, characterised by a culture of challenge and shared responsibility. To ensure good management and accountability, the governing body structures its sub-committees so that each committee has full delegated authority. This structure provides a clear mechanism for governors to hold themselves to account, and the strategic decisions align with the character of a voluntary aided Church in Wales school. This collaborative approach to leadership focuses on school development during a designated INSET week. By bringing Governors and staff together for collective planning, the school ensures that its theological vision remains at the heart of all pedagogical and operational improvements.

The outward-facing aspect of this leadership is exemplified by the learners' Senedd. In six Senedd groups, learners engage with learning initiatives that demonstrate the vision 'Caru Dysgu' extends beyond the classroom, making a real impact on the local economy and social wellbeing. For example, learners from Criw Cymraeg have contributed through various community projects, including a community café initiative. These diverse efforts have fostered a learning environment where learners are engaged in the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales, encouraged to actively influence the local, national and global world.

In summary, the leadership at St Brides Major establishes a strategic system in which the theological vision, the local environmental context of the Heritage Coast, and strong governance weave together. This has resulted in a Church in Wales primary school that is both high-achieving and a key guardian of the local community's heritage and future environmental sustainability.

Spotlight:

Guardians of the World: Connecting Academic Ambition with Spiritual Growth

At St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School, the governors' strategic vision and collaborative innovation align learning with spiritual and environmental stewardship.

- **Strategic Accountability:** The school operates a sophisticated governance model that fosters a culture of professional challenge. This ensures that long-term infrastructure and operational decisions remain consistently aligned with the school's voluntary aided status.
- **Collaborative Innovation:** Strategic use is made of shared school development planning forums, such as designated INSET weeks, to unite staff and governors in a collective commitment to the school's ongoing vision.

Through a combination of strategic leadership and shared vision, the governing body, leadership team and staff actively nurture the learners as ethical leaders of the future. By grounding academic achievement in a sense of responsibility, the

school ensures that every child leaves St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary School with a 'Love of Learning for Life' and as a genuine 'Guardian of the World'.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship

Y

The school meets the statutory requirement for religion, values and ethics (where inspected)

Y

Religion, values and ethics is objective, critical and pluralistic

Y