Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Montgomery Voluntary Controlled Primary School.

Church Bank
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6QA

Diocese: St. Asaph

Local authority: Powys.
Date of inspection: 27th March 2025
Date of last inspection: February 2019
School's unique reference number: 6663002
Headteacher: Miss Sarah Brian
Inspector's name and number: Mr Neil Roberts B.Ed.

School context

Montgomery Church in Wales School is situated in the historic town of Montgomery. It is a co-educational English medium school for pupils aged of 4 and 11 with 108 pupils on roll. The Headteacher has a two-day teaching commitment, there are 2 full-time and 3 part-time teachers, 1 full-time and 2 part-time teaching assistants, 1 ALN intervention support worker and 1 part-time learning support who works 1:1 with an ALN pupil. The school has 3 days administrative support. There are four classes in the school.
2% of pupil are from an ethnic minority background, 3% of pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.
The school has identified around 7% of pupils with additional learning needs with a further 15% receiving additional support through a universal learning provision plan. 9% of pupils receive means tested free school meals. Attendance for the last academic year was 95.21%.
At the time of the inspection, no child had been withdrawn from Collective Worship.
No pupils have been excluded in the past twelve months.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Montgomery V.C. as a Church in Wales school

Montgomery Voluntary Controlled school is a happy and caring Christian place of learning where a strong ethos of love and mutual respect for one another influences all aspects of school life. The school has a long-established Christian culture and heritage and is very proud of its Church status at the heart of the community. The school's Christian vision is embedded in its strong theological roots and is clearly identified in its vision statement "In God's love we are happily growing together to be the best that we can be." Seven aims clearly focus on the school's Christian mission:

- To teach Christian values through the experiences offered to pupils and through serving our community by providing an education of the highest quality.
- To provide an environment where children can feel happy and secure, where they are not afraid to make mistakes and everyone is valued for their individuality
- To believe that children should be taught to value their surroundings, their sense of Cynefin and gain satisfaction from achieving their potential.

- To model care and respect for one another so children learn and earn the respect of their peers and adults alike.
- To teach understanding of the concepts of respect, kindness, faith, trust, honesty, tolerance and friendship.
- To respect every individual's contribution to the school and wider community.
- To support the children in building positive relationships.

The school believes that by working together, the school community will learn the importance of Christian values through regular, spiritual and meaningful Collective Worship and daily prayer. An enriched curriculum which contains well planned, purposeful and engaging RVE experiences including diverse cultural and religious studies will help pupils to live their lives as ethically informed citizens, who will understand the importance of living a life with a good set of morals. The school strives to provide learning opportunities which are underpinned by its core Christian values. The school recognises the importance of ensuring it promotes its Christian ethos in accordance with the Trust Deed. There is a commitment within the whole school community to ensure that the legacy of this Christian foundation continues to be at the heart of school life.

The school is proud of its Christian ethos, reflected in its visual identity and activities. There are clear indicators that this is a Church in Wales school, with signage, symbols, displays and artefacts in entrances, classrooms and communal areas. Each classroom features a dedicated reflection area with a central focal point, including an altar with three candles representing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This space also provides access to the school's prayers. The school has established a lunchtime prayer group with reflection activities. This group is available to all pupils. There are plans to further develop the outdoor prayer areas to ensure that all children have access to a place of quiet prayer and reflection.

Established strengths

- The passionate Christian vision of the Headteacher which is very well supported by staff and governors.
- The school's welcoming, caring and inclusive Christian learning environment.
- Strong intergenerational links with the church and local community.
- The exceptional pastoral care and support shown to all pupils.

Recommendations

- To continue to develop the RVE curriculum, focusing on planning, teaching and learning and the lenses – ensuring regular reflection and review to see what is working well and what may need changing.
- To continue to develop the evaluation process for Collective Worship ensuring involvement from the Governing Body.
- To share the school's good practice and achievements and further develop links with the wider education community, including other Church in Wales schools.

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

Montgomery Church in Wales school fosters a vibrant and supportive learning community where pupils enjoy learning and are proud to be members of their school, The school aims to provide a distinctive, high quality and relevant education within the context of Christian belief and practice, in accordance with the principles of the Church in Wales. A strong feature of the school is its close family ethos which is enhanced by respectful and positive relationships between pupils and staff. There is a clear focus on pastoral care. Pupils are very well supported by staff. All pupils are aware that staff can be approached at any time to discuss personal or sensitive issues or concerns. Relationships are founded on a strong sense of understanding and caring for others.

Christian values are at the heart of everything that the school aims to attain. They underpin its ethos and teaching. The children are at the centre of everything that the school sets out to achieve. The core values have an important impact on the development, attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. They behave very well and show respect, care and consideration towards others. Each child is valued as a unique and important member of the school family and nurtured to reach their full potential. Pupils articulate the distinct characteristics of the school's values and the significant impact they have on their lives. They feel safe and well cared for. Children are provided with opportunities to contribute to their learning experiences and show confidence in taking responsibility for their actions. They are curious and encouraged to discuss and share opinions and ideas.

Pupils take pride in their work and achievements and make good progress both academically and personally. They are taught to evaluate their work, reflect for improvement and apply this mindset to all areas of life. They are guided to develop the required skills that will help them to be effective members of the community. Pupils are very supportive of each other. Older pupils have a particularly caring and thoughtful attitude towards younger children. All pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors.

Pupil voice is an essential and influential part of the life of the school and contributes significantly to the Christian vision of the school. Pupils take on leadership roles through numerous councils and committees, actively contributing to school life and developing key life skills. They enjoy their roles in these committees. They include School Council, Criw Cymraeg, Eco Committee Young Entrepreneurs, Healthy Schools, Sports Ambassadors and Worship Team. The school encourages autonomy and responsibility, empowering pupils to have a voice and influence in their learning and community.

The school is at the heart of community life and is true to its Christian foundation. It is extremely proud of its Church in Wales status and recognises its close and significant links to St. Nicholas's church. These links foster a strong sense of community with pupils taking an active role during church services and community events. They are very well supported and guided by the parish priest whose advice, encouragement and consideration are highly valued by the school. She has a significant role in developing links between the church, school, diocese and local community, especially in helping pupils reflect on their personal development and values. The school visits St. Nicholas's for planned activities to support the RVE curriculum and to celebrate significant Church festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Other activities include an Easter trail, Nature workshop and Year 6 Leavers service. The school is participating in two exciting community projects – "The Living Church project" and "The Global Neighbourhood Project." The church and local community have a positive influence on the children by promoting a sense of belonging and commitment.
Montgomery V.C. school ensures pupils are inclusive and aware of the needs of others. Pupils show care, compassion and a strong commitment to helping others. The school is committed to supporting a range of charities annually and effectively promotes the children's understanding of the principles of sustainable development, fair trade, global citizenship, healthy living, recycling and the stewardship of God's earth.

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum informed by pupils and staff. Staff work collaboratively to develop and deliver high quality provision across the school. They work hard to deliver a range of engaging, stimulating, challenging and meaningful learning experiences. Pupils are encouraged to explore, investigate and question. The curriculum is structured around a four-year cycle, incorporating RVE into key themes- ensuring that RVE is integrated into each of the Big Questions.

Pupils regularly engage in both independent and collaborative RVE work, fostering teamwork and enriching discussion. As part of Dydd Gwener Gwych, pupils worked in vertical working groups to create a replica of Emma Yarlett's "The Big Frieze", collaboratively designing six frames inspired by the Bible - carefully considering how to represent each part visually and through words. The completed work is impressively displayed in the school's main corridor.

Older pupils connected with a school in Kunagota, Hungary. This partnership involved live lessons where children shared their cultural heritage and traditional hymns. In addition, musicians from the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest led music lessons, further enhancing the pupils' understanding of other countries, cultures and languages.

As part of a Welsh cultural experience, pupils attended the annual Plygain service at St Nicholas' where they learnt about Plygain and sang traditional Welsh hymns. As part of their RVE studies, pupils have explored Christianity, other faiths and non-religious philosophies, allowing them to examine religion from a pluralistic perspective. RVE lessons have included diverse cultural and religious studies exploring different faiths and celebrating global traditions.

The curriculum effectively integrates RVE into various aspects of school life, offering pupils rich, purposeful and stimulating learning experiences. By combining independent and collaborative work, international partnerships and hands-on cultural experiences, children have developed a good understanding of Christianity, other faiths and diverse cultures. This approach has fostered a holistic educational experience that promotes spiritual, academic and cultural growth.

The development for the Curriculum for Wales and RVE in particular is led very effectively by all members of staff.

The impact of collective worship on the school community

Collective Worship is delivered daily and follows a distinctly Christian structure. The school endeavours to ensure that the principles for all acts of worship are inclusive, spiritual and educational and reflect the school's core Christian values. Worship is regarded as a special occasion which provides all members of the school community with an opportunity to come together as one Christian family. It is central to the daily life of the school and provides a clear, unifying focus for the start of each day.

Planning for Collective Worship aligns with the Liturgical Year, incorporating key Christian events, Bible stories, Saints and Christian figures. The school also includes stories from other religions, charity work, national events and topics such as mental health and well-being. These acts of worship are underpinned by the school's Christian values. Planning is balanced and ensures that the school's core Christian values are prominently included. Innovative use is made of the "Roots and Fruits" resource.

Good use is made of the Welsh language in worship in prayers, songs, responses and instructions. Pupils enjoy singing. Prayers are also said in Welsh at the end of the morning session and at the end of the school day. Significant occasions in Welsh Christian history and culture are celebrated in worship in school and at St Nicholas's church.

The content of Collective Worship is planned to meet the developmental levels and needs of all pupils, with younger pupils receiving more concrete examples during class worship, while older pupils are encouraged in higher level thoughts and activities. Worship at Montgomery VC provides its pupils with opportunities to think about God's teachings, reflect on what they have witnessed and heard and consider how these things can impact on their lives and the decisions they may make. When questioned, pupils enthusiastically recalled many significant Bible stories from the Old and The New Testament. They spoke about them with obvious enjoyment and pleasure and with a good understanding of the underlying moral messages.

Pupils are actively involved in Collective Worship from a young age and are regularly given opportunities to lead and plan worship sessions in class and whole school worship. Children are attentive and participate enthusiastically when invited to do so, enjoying opportunities to share and reflect with their peers. Pupil voice groups enthusiastically engage in leading worship, both at school and at St Nicholas' Church.

Children enjoy their participation in worship and are confident in discussing issues which may arise. Worship is a positive and fulfilling experience for most pupils and helps them develop an awareness that life involves choices of belief, attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

The school's strong relationship with the church is reflected in its worship provision. The school's relationship with the church is effectively maintained. Collective Worship is a shared experience among pupils, staff and clergy and is not restricted to the school building. Pupils and staff are regular visitors to St Nicholas' to share in worship celebration of all Christian festivals – actively supported and encouraged by the parish priest, whose dedication and support make a significant contribution to the Christian ethos and spiritual development of the school community. She is a regular visitor to the school and leads worship at least once a term. Other visitors also make important contributions to worship. The Chapel representative, Youth Church Leader, Open the Book team and Impact team also visit at least every half term. Their visits are greatly appreciated and contribute positively to the spiritual development of all pupils.

The school's close relationship with St Nicholas' church, the local church community and other religious groups promotes a strong sense of community and spiritual growth.

Worship focuses on important moments in the life of the school and community. The school recognises, reflects and celebrates the successes and achievements of all members of the school family. Celebrating success is something the school is proud of and is included in worship on a weekly basis. Success, individuality and diversity are celebrated joyfully.

Governors actively engage with the school, monitoring its progress and supporting its development. They attend and participate in school life, including Collective Worship and worship at St Nicholas' and other activities that reflect the school's Christian ethos.

Collective Worship at Montgomery Church in Wales school is a key part of the school's spiritual life, offering a well-structured and engaging experience that fosters reflection, community involvement and personal growth for all pupils.

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

Montgomery Church in Wales school is very well led by the Headteacher who is open, determined and passionate in her desire to move the school forward and further develop its Church in Wales status. Her energetic and inspirational leadership has set a clear focus and vision for the school to progress. She has high expectations and a strong sense of purpose that has a positive impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. Her commitment has ensured that the school's Christian ethos has been communicated and modelled well to pupils, staff, governors and parents who all share this vision. The Headteacher recognises that growing in a faith is a lifelong journey.

The school is at the heart of the town of Montgomery and the Headteacher effectively promotes good links with the church and community. The school actively shares its work and achievements with the wider community.

Members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and involve themselves enthusiastically in plans and activities aimed at taking the school forward. All staff are involved in strategic planning processes and strive to provide the best educational experiences for all pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well collaboratively as a united team. The Headteacher and staff work very well together in developing provision and promoting the school's Church in Wales status. There is a shared commitment to ongoing improvement within the school community. A culture of successful learning is fostered whereby contributions from all stakeholders towards school improvement are both appreciated and impactful.

The professional development of all staff is considered and prioritised when required. The school has worked very closely with the Diocese to discuss and plan for key developments – particularly to ensure that the RVE curriculum is entwined with the termly Big Questions whilst ensuring that the lenses from the Church in Wales website are used effectively. The school regularly reviews the school vision to ensure it is purposeful and continues to frame the Christian ethos effectively. The senior leadership team attends termly diocesan meetings and connects with other local church schools.

The Governing Body have a very good understanding of the nature, purpose and vision of a Church in Wales school and are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities. They recognise the importance of the character of the school and its established Christian ethos. Governors are very supportive of the staff and are committed to the school's further development. They work diligently to ensure that its progress as a Church in Wales school receives high priority.

Governors visit the school regularly and contribute positively to many areas of school life, offering advice, encouragement and constructive challenge, based on a mutual bond of respect and trust. They participate in a range of activities, including worship, lesson observations, learning walks, book scrutinies and community activities. Information regarding the life of the school and progress reports and details regarding RVE and Collective Worship are provided to the Governing Body by the Headteacher.

Montgomery school recognises the importance of developing good relationships with parents and guardians – who are very supportive. Communication between the school and parents is very good. Parents are appreciative of the school's open-door policy and feel comfortable and confident to meet with staff when necessary.

Parents are very positive about the school's caring, stimulating and challenging learning environment and especially complimentary with regard to the individual attention that pupils receive to promote and develop their spiritual, social and academic potential. The school ensures that parents are kept informed about their child's progress across the school. RVE and other important issues have a clear focus in written reports and parents' meetings. Parents value the opportunities they receive to attend worship at school and at St Nicholas' church, praising the caring Christian ethos that permeates all these occasions. They are fully aware of the Christian values that are an integral part of the school and very proud to be part of this strong Christian community.

Montgomery Church in Wales Primary School is very well led and managed with a clearly articulated Christian vision and sense of purpose for the future. The Headteacher, staff and Governing Body work effectively together to promote and develop the Christian ethos and values of the school for the benefit of all its pupils.

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)	**N/A**
Religion, values and ethics is objective, critical and pluralistic	**Y**