Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report Proforma

Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School

Salop Rd,
Welshpool
SY21 7FA

Diocese: St Asaph

Local authority: Powys
Dates of inspection: 30 September 2026
Date of last inspection: N/A
School's unique reference number:
Headteacher: Mrs Lorna Tuffin
Inspector's name: Revd Dr Kevin Ellis

School context

Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School was established in 2017 following an amalgamation of 4 schools only one of which was a designated church school. This report is a reflection on the present but also on the significant journey that has been taken over the last 9 years.

The school serves the town of Welshpool. It is an English medium school. Currently, the school has 262 pupils on roll. The school community celebrates local diversity, with 27% of learners speaking English as an additional language (EAL). Among pupils of statutory school age, 23% are eligible for free school meals (eFSM). The school is an inclusive learning environment with 16% of learners identified as having Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Welsh language and culture are appreciated and valued throughout the school as seen in lessons, displays and the work of Criw Cymraeg.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of [name of school] as a Church in Wales school

Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School is an inclusive and welcoming school that is rooted in its local community. Its overarching vision of bringing out the best in each other is something that is shared and articulated by all stakeholders. It is rooted in the journey of amalgamation that has been taken in the recent past and lived out as the school continues its journey as a proud church school. Three key values

underpin the overarching vision, namely: Respect, Persevere and Discover. These are interlinked with Christian values enunciated by the Diocese of St Asaph. They are reviewed each year.

Relationships at all levels within the school flow out of a commitment to honesty and openness. This underpins interaction with pupils, amongst staff, with the parish church and other churches in the area, parents, and other agencies. The school recognises the journey that they have been on in the formation of a new Church school. The headteacher, staff and governors can be rightly proud of what they have achieved as a church school in a relatively short time. It is clear that children are the centre of all that the school does. Staff appear to go the extra mile for their learners, and this is modelled by the headteacher, governors and staff. This is something that learners and their parents/carers are quick to say they appreciate. At the heart of this is a continuing desire to be a school that is rooted or incarnated in the local community. Staff say they 'know the community.' Most parents agree with an overwhelming feeling that 'we are part of the school'.

Learners speak confidently about their school being part of the Church family. Collective worship is enjoyed and learners value the input of the vicar as well as clergy and church members from other denominations. Across the school, there are clear and visible signs that it is a Church school, from the diocesan logo at the entrance to the cross (from one of the previous schools) in the entrance hall. Learners and staff are able to talk about why they feel these features are important. In each class, there is a focal point of a candle and bibles. These are used for lunchtime and end of the day prayers. There is a specific prayer room that is well resourced, appreciated and used.

Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School is a school that has learnt and reflected upon what it means to be a Church school. It has done so in a way that is authentic to its community and one that benefits all members of its community, particularly the learners.

Established strengths

- The relationship between the local church and school at all levels, including within Collective Worship, RVE, governance and pastoral care is exemplary.

- Christian values are clearly communicated, consistently modelled and actively celebrated by all members of the school community, ensuring they are embedded in everyday school life.

- Spiritual development is a golden thread throughout the life of the school. Learners are provided with regular opportunities for prayer, reflection and worship, alongside experiences that encourage them to explore questions of meaning, purpose and belief. This is done in an inclusive way and consistent with the context of the local community the school serves.

Recommendations

- To develop the outdoor area as a place for prayer and reflection in order to combine spiritual reflection with outdoor learning in all its forms.
- To ensure that RVE continues to be embedded within cross-curricular learning experiences, continuing to enable learners to explore religious and ethical concepts across a range of subjects.
- To work with the Diocese to ensure cogent succession planning for Foundation governors.

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 journey of the school over the last few years is one that it is celebrated throughout the school. It is a story of an amalgamation that has led to a confident Church school. There is much respect for the individual history of the previous schools with the school emblems incorporated into the emblem of Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School. School leaders and managers have worked hard to establish a new community that is embedded both in the local community and in Christian values. The consistent commitment of the local parish church and its clergy have been an important component to the establishment of the values. This is seen throughout the school in RVE and management, in collective worship, as well as in the committed presence of local clergy in most aspects of the life of the school.

The RVE co-ordinator speaks warmly of the input of the local vicar and his team into the subject, for example in the provision of material and support for biblical topics, e.g. the story of Moses. The relationship between school and church is confident enough for the school to ask for support and at times the church to offer support. An example of the latter was the recent Bread Project that involved other church schools which helped reinforce learners' understanding of the significance of bread within the Christian faith and its importance in biblical teaching and worship. The link between RVE and the church is described as offering an 'authentic lived experience of Christianity'.

RVE is embedded within the life of the school. There were several exemplary examples of creative use of the subject during the day. One class was looking at the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which led to discussion of deep questions surrounding what kindness is and conversation about what we could say about Jesus. Learners and staff were comfortable and engaged with the topic matters. Another example was seen in the innovative drawing of a Peace Shield, where the emblems that learners were encouraged to use were clearly linked to the values of the school. Learners repeatedly and willingly can make such connections, for example: friendship, love, equality, kindness, and perseverance. This indicates how deeply the values of the school are embedded throughout school life.

The use of values jars has become an important way the school celebrates its ethos and vision. When learners display a particular attribute for example patience

or thankfulness, a gemstone is placed in the jar. Once a jar is full then a reward for the whole school is received that is appropriate to the value. Staff and learners agree that the values 'are lived'. Worship leaders are able to make the connection between the values and the Christian ethos of the school.

A willingness to explore wonder is at the heart of the school. This is apparent in the creative teaching methods, the use of the school grounds for teaching as well as through play, prayer and worship. Throughout all facets of the school, there is openness and inclusivity. Parents confirm that people of all faiths and none are welcomed in the life of the school and can embrace the values of the school as their own. Faith is respected and valued. The school has been and continues to be on a journey. The local churches have been a respected and giving partner in that journey. The respect of all parties involved is obvious and filled with thankfulness.

The impact of collective worship on the school community

Collective worship (CW) plays an integral role in the life of the school. Worship leaders are elected from each year group. They are clearly enthusiastic, committed ambassadors for the place of CW in the life of the school. They introduce appropriate liturgy at the beginning and end of each act of worship, whether in the hall, in class or in the local church. From comments made by other learners, their role is deeply appreciated.

The weekly pattern of worship is well-thought out and effective with worship being led by the headteacher and other staff, local clergy, and the Open the Book team. CW conducted through the medium of Welsh is appreciated. Learners value the different ways that worship is offered. Each week a different class is given the opportunity to respond in the moment as to the impact of the act of worship by placing a gemstone in a jar. CW is evaluated by a small staff team with input from the worship leaders and in addition by an annual survey completed by parents. The school is committed to continually improving how CW is monitored and ensuring what is offered is inclusive, invitational, challenging, and stimulating.

The act of CW which took place during the inspection was joyful, interactive, and engaging, drawing out the children's natural curiosity. There was much laughter yet enveloped in an atmosphere of calm respect. Bible verses were linked in appropriately, with specific challenges. Learners were confident joining in the songs and sharing in liturgical responses with ease. One of the school's vision words, 'discover' links well with the sense of wonder that CW seems to bring out. Many learners can talk confidently about what they have learnt in assembly beyond simply being able to say what they enjoy. Faith is something that is talked about both in the class and at break time.

This is something that is taken out into the wider community. 'Clergy are instantly recognisable in church and in the town'. This encourages a crossover between school and church, and parents, even those from a non-faith background willingly support some of the church's activities. Several staff also speak of being recognised locally. This deep commitment in and to the local community is recognised by parents and carers. As one member of staff puts it, the church is there for the journey of life. The partnership between school and church has been

fundamental to the creation of a new Church school, and CW has played an important part in this process.

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

The values of the school are lived out, modelled by the headteacher and her team. They are shared with key stakeholders. Learners speak confidently about them and most parents and carers embrace them. The values are evaluated annually.

The headteacher leads with honesty and openness, and in her leadership encourages the flourishing of staff and learners. This is an approach that is embraced by the whole school. A teacher on supply observed how welcoming the school is as a place to work. Parents and carers can say that 'nothing is too much trouble' for the school and praise the work of the pastoral team. Learners, staff, parents, and governors can connect the support and care offered by the school to the Christian values. The local church is a significant partner in providing additional pastoral care through coffee mornings, clubs, and co-operating with the provision of food hampers at specific times of the year. Parents and carers speak warmly of the involvement of the 'Reverend', and in turn they are content to get involved in church activities regardless of their own faith position. This underlines the fact that the school provides a space for faith to be talked about openly and inclusively, where difference is embraced.

Professional learning and leadership development are prioritised across the school, strengthening staff expertise and supporting effective succession planning. This commitment is demonstrated through the Headteacher's participation in the Flourishing Leaders Programme and the ongoing professional development of the RVE Leads. The Diocese provides strong support for collective worship, RVE, governance, and ethos. The school has committed itself to being part of a pilot programme that links collective worship to the weekly lectionary.

Foundation governors understand their role well and offer the school strong challenge and support. Governors have a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. The governing body evidently works well as a team. They are aware of the journey the school has been on and are proud of their part in its success.

Spotlight

Effective Church-School Partnership

The relationship between the school and its local church is exemplary and stands as a distinctive strength of the school's Christian character. There is a deep sense of mutual pride and shared commitment, with the school valuing its Church in Wales identity and the church demonstrating an unwavering investment in the life of the school and wider community.

The contribution of the vicar and local church extends well beyond collective worship and governance. Rooted in a strong commitment to parish ministry, clergy and church representatives are a visible, welcoming and trusted presence within

the school and community. This authentic engagement has fostered relationships characterised by openness, trust and mutual respect.

The partnership is notably reciprocal. From the outset of the school's journey towards becoming one school in one building, the church played a significant role in creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Staff gathering in St Mary's Church House for early development work set the tone for a partnership built on collaboration and trust. This spirit continues to permeate all aspects of school life, including Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), collective worship, governance and community engagement. Church-led and school-led initiatives alike demonstrate a genuine commitment to working together for the benefit of children, families and the wider community.

While church and school retain their distinct missions, the partnership enables each to flourish. Together they have created a strong sense of *Cynefin* where learners, staff, parents, carers and community members feel welcomed, valued and connected. There is a tangible sense that both communities are 'at home' with one another.

This partnership offers a powerful example of effective practice from which clergy, diocesan leaders and school leaders across Wales could learn. Significantly, its success is underpinned by the humility of those involved. The achievements of church and school have not arisen from strategic ambition alone, but from relationships built on honesty, vulnerability, openness and deeply lived Christian values. As a result, the partnership provides a compelling model of how church and school can work together to enrich the lives of children and serve their community.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship	**Yes**
The school meets the statutory requirement for religion, values and ethics (where inspected)	**N/A**
Religion, values and ethics is objective, critical and pluralistic	**Yes**