



“Working, Praying, Sharing and Learning Together”
“Gweithio, Gweddio, Rhannu a Dysgu gyda’n gilydd”

September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report to Parents from the Governing Body of St Mary's RC Primary School Brynmawr. This report describes the work, activities and achievements of our school for the academic year 2025-2026 and fulfils the Welsh Government requirements of an annual report to parents.

Section 94 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 sets out how parents may formally request a meeting to discuss this report or any other relevant matters with the Governing Body. This report is available to all parents and carers electronically and on request, in hard copy, from the school office.

It has been another busy year at St Mary's! Last September we welcomed back our incredible pupils and families and said "Hello!" to those new to our school - many of whom are also new to Wales. Later in the year we were thrilled to share the outcomes of our successful CSI Inspection with you and in the Summer Term four of our pupils received the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and Holy Communion. These are just some of many highlights and you can read more in the accompanying report. The Governors are proud that our school continues to grow from strength to strength under the leadership of Mr Buckley and through the hard work and commitment of all staff.

Thank you to the Governing Body and all who support it for giving your time and commitment and finally, on behalf of the whole Governing Body, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all parents, volunteers and friends of our school for your continued support.

With every good wish,

Mrs K Lewis

Chair of Governors

St Mary's RC Primary School Brynmawr Governing Body and Terms of Office 2025-2026

The Governing Body is made up of 12 governors of different categories. **Foundation Governors** are appointed by the Archdiocese of Cardiff since the Catholic Church in England and Wales is the founding body of our school. There is a **Teacher Governor**, who is elected by the teachers, and a **Staff Governor** elected by the other staff, these ensure that the staff's voice is heard in the decision-making. Likewise, our **Parent Governor** is elected by the parents and represents their views on the Governing Body. There is one governor chosen by the **Local Authority**. The Headteacher and the clerk also attend meetings. The governors come from a variety of backgrounds and have different skill sets. Their time is given freely and everyone brings something unique to the working of the governing body and its sub-committees. Governors can be contacted via the school office.

<u>Foundation Governors</u>	<u>Teacher & Staff Governors</u>
Karen Lewis - Chair Janine Williams - Vice Chair Fr Liam Hennessy Zanetta Siepierska-Szerszen Russell Hathway Maria Davis (Terms of office end 31/08/26)	Julia Fitzgerald (Term of office ends 19/01/28) Gemma Blackwell (Term of office ends 11/05/29)
<u>Parent Governor</u>	<u>Local Authority Governor</u>
Elisha Jones (Term of office ends 05/10/29)	Michelle Davis (Term of office ends 29/06/29)
<u>Headteacher</u>	<u>Clerk</u>
Martin Buckley	EAS Clerking Service

The Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has a strategic role to ensure the vision, mission, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined by setting the aims and objectives of the school. Governors are responsible for promoting high standards of educational achievement, whilst ensuring the school meets statutory requirements.

Work undertaken by governors includes:

- Being responsible for school policies
- Being responsible for admissions
- Employing members of staff
- Advising and supporting the Head
- Ensuring the school meets the needs of the pupils
- Being responsible for the budget

Voluntary Aided School

St Mary's is a Voluntary Aided School. This means that religious education and worship are led through the Catholic faith and we can apply specific requirements to pupil admissions and staff appointments. The governors are responsible for ensuring and promoting the Catholic Christian ethos in the school

Meetings

The Governing Body meet once every half-term. During our meetings we receive reports from the Headteacher and subject leaders. Sub-committees meet more frequently, as needed. All governors attend training provided by the Archdiocese, Local Authority and Education Consortium.

Policies

The school and Governing Body review school policies and progress towards implementing strategies when appropriate. These can be accessed by contacting the school office.

School Development Plan 2025/26

The school development plan is our strategic approach to help continually improve the quality of provision at St Mary's leading to the highest standards achievable for all our pupils. It is produced annually and reviewed termly. A summary of it is found below.

School Development Plan – End of Year Review

PRIORITY 1: To continue to embed the Religious Education Directory, and to continue to develop Catholic Life & Mission and Prayer & Liturgy

All classes are now consistently using the Magister teaching and planning resource for Religious Education, with every RE Branch delivered through Magister during the academic year. Looking ahead to September 2026, the school will further strengthen assessment in RE through the implementation of Magister's assessment framework, supported by the RE Leader's completion of assessment training in April 2026.

Since its introduction in Spring 2026, the RE thematic overview has ensured that Religious Education remains at the heart of the curriculum. It reflects the principles of To Know You More Clearly – The Religious Education Directory, with all Areas of Learning and Experience planned through an RE lens and linked to the relevant curriculum Branches.

Monitoring evidence indicates that many pupils are developing increasing religious literacy and are able to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically, and recognise the demands of faith in everyday life through their understanding and application of Catholic Social Teaching.

Most pupils can independently contribute to the planning and preparation of liturgy, selecting appropriate scripture passages, prayers, music and symbolic actions that reflect the liturgical season and theme.

The quality and frequency of pupil-led liturgies demonstrate clear progression across the school. Older pupils show increasing confidence, independence and leadership in planning and leading worship, while younger pupils actively participate and contribute. This is particularly evident in Years 5 and 6, where pupils regularly lead whole-school acts of worship and serve as positive role models for younger children.

- Assessment in Religious Education - Ensure the development of summative assessment and that opportunities for effective AFL are embedded within teaching and learning. This will include the consistent use of next-

step marking and high-quality verbal feedback to support pupils in deepening their theological understanding, religious literacy, and ability to articulate their learning.

- Further strengthen pupil-led liturgy and worship across the school by providing increased opportunities for pupils of all ages to plan, lead, and evaluate whole school prayer and liturgical experiences. This will support progression in pupils' leadership skills, deepen their understanding of the liturgical year, and foster greater ownership of the school's prayer life and Catholic mission.

PRIORITY 2: To strengthen the consistency and impact of teaching and learning experiences ensuring high expectations and effective opportunities for pupils to develop independence (with a clear focus on raising standards and accelerating the rate of progress in pupils' oracy and writing skills).

A consistent focus on learning intentions, success criteria and feedback has led to improvements in pupils' understanding of their learning. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 can articulate clearly what they are learning and many explain why their learning is important. In Reception to Year 2, many pupils can describe what they are learning and how it contributes to their wider learning journey.

The introduction and consistent use of success criteria, including 'Bump It Up' boards, has strengthened pupils' understanding of what successful learning looks like. Most pupils use these effectively to support self-assessment and identify areas for improvement. Many pupils can discuss their next steps in learning and understand how feedback supports their progress.

Most pupils participate confidently in paired, group and whole-class discussions, listening attentively and responding appropriately. Staff consistently model ambitious vocabulary and provide planned opportunities for pupils to apply new language across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils demonstrate increasing confidence when speaking and use more ambitious vocabulary in a range of contexts.

Progress is also evident in writing. Many pupils apply writing skills across Areas of Learning and Experience and transfer previously taught skills successfully into authentic contexts. Many pupils show improvements in spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting. In the Early Years, pupils have demonstrated stronger mark-making and early writing skills, supported by improvements in gross and fine motor development.

Evidence from book scrutiny, learning walks, pupil voice activities and progression reviews indicates that pupils are becoming more reflective learners

and are increasingly able to discuss their learning and identify how to improve their work. Writing standards across the school have improved, particularly in pupils' application of writing skills across the curriculum.

While progress has been made, some aspects of the target remain ongoing. Across the school, a majority of pupils are not yet able to explain clearly how pupil voice influences curriculum themes and learning experiences. Opportunities for pupils to shape aspects of the curriculum need to be strengthened and made more explicit.

Although many pupils understand the purpose of feedback, its quality and consistency vary across classes. In a minority of cases, feedback does not identify precise next steps for improvement, limiting its impact on pupil progress. There remains a need to embed a consistent whole-school approach to in-the-moment feedback and ensure that pupils routinely act upon feedback to improve their learning.

In addition, the pace of progress for pupils with ALN and those with lower basic skills remains inconsistent, particularly in writing. While targeted interventions have had a positive impact for some learners, these pupils do not consistently make the same rate of progress as their peers. Accelerating progress for these groups will remain a priority moving forward.

- Strengthen pupil voice and curriculum influence across the school by providing more consistent opportunities for pupils to contribute to curriculum planning and ensuring they understand how their views shape learning experiences.
- Improve the consistency and impact of feedback, particularly for pupils with ALN and those with lower basic skills, by ensuring feedback identifies precise next steps and is acted upon promptly to accelerate progress in writing and across the curriculum.

PRIORITY 3: To improve the accuracy and impact of self-evaluation so that school improvement planning is sharply focused and leads to measurable improvements in provision and pupils' outcomes.

The school has made consistent progress in developing a robust culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Most leaders, staff and governors demonstrate an improved shared understanding of effective self-evaluation and improvement planning. School leaders at all levels are increasingly confident in triangulating first-hand evidence from a range of sources and use this information effectively to identify strengths and priorities for improvement. As

a result, leaders are more confident in writing evaluatively and focusing on the impact of provision on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Many staff contribute confidently to self-evaluation processes and provide evaluative evidence that focuses appropriately on the quality of provision and its impact on outcomes for pupils. This has strengthened collective ownership of school improvement and enhanced staff engagement in the monitoring process. Nearly all leaders engage effectively in professional learning opportunities that support them in refining and challenging judgements. Consequently, leaders' evaluations are increasingly accurate and consistent across the school.

Monitoring activities focus strongly on the quality of learning, teaching and pupils' progress, enabling leaders to identify areas for development with greater precision.

Evidence from monitoring activities is used effectively to inform improvement planning. Findings lead directly to targeted actions that have contributed to improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils. Leaders and governors are increasingly skilled in producing written evaluations that are concise, evaluative and focused on impact. Reports now distinguish more clearly between description and evaluation and identify priorities for improvement with greater accuracy.

The quality and consistency of self-evaluation have improved across the school. Leaders have developed a stronger understanding of effective monitoring and evaluation processes, resulting in more accurate judgements and better-informed improvement planning. This has contributed to improvements in teaching practice and strengthened pupils' progress over time.

- Further refine the school's Monitoring, Evaluation and Review processes to ensure they are concise, manageable and sustainable for all staff and leaders.

PRIORITY 4: To strengthen whole-school wellbeing by promoting an inclusive, equitable approach that improves attendance, supports staff and pupil mental health, and strengthens the school's role as a community focussed setting.

Most pupils are developing effective strategies to manage their emotions and demonstrate empathy and care for others. A strong culture of wellbeing is evident across the school, supported by meaningful opportunities for pupil voice. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 take active roles in pupil voice groups that promote wellbeing and contribute positively to school initiatives. Nearly all pupils display positive attitudes to learning, settle quickly to tasks and persevere when work becomes challenging.

The school continues to make strong progress in supporting vulnerable pupils. Most eligible pupils are making clear progress from their individual starting points and demonstrate increasing confidence and resilience in their learning. Targeted interventions are effectively meeting pupils' needs, ensuring that nearly all eligible pupils feel valued, included and able to access the full range of enrichment opportunities.

2024 - 2026 Attendance comparison

Attendance has improved significantly and is now above 93%, reflecting the impact of robust whole-school strategies. Overall attendance increased from 90.7% to 93.6%, representing a rise of 2.9 percentage points. Attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals rose sharply from 86% to 91.5%, reducing the gap with non-eligible pupils from 6.3% to 2.11%. Improvements are also evident across gender, with boys' attendance rising to 93.9% and girls' to 93.3%. These improvements demonstrate a consistent and sustained focus on raising attendance for all groups of learners.

There has also been strong progress in reducing persistent absence. The number of pupils classified as persistently absent fell from 112 pupils (28.9%) in July 2024 to 78 pupils (20%) by February 2025, a reduction of 8.9 percentage points. Most pupils identified as persistent absentees show improved attendance over time, and most families engage positively with the school and external agencies to address barriers. As a result, many of these pupils demonstrate improved engagement, resilience and confidence in their learning. Additional attendance indicators show further positive trends. Unauthorised absence has reduced from 3% to 2%, while authorised absence has also decreased from 5.9% to 4.4%. Attendance for ALN pupils has declined from 93.7% to 91%; however, this reflects a narrowing of the gap in relation to other groups. Overall, the school has made strong progress in improving attendance and engagement, though continued focus is needed to further support specific groups and sustain these gains over time

- To continue to raise attendance for the most persistent absentees.
- To ensure that the pace of progress for most eFSM pupils is equivalent to their non-eFSM peers.

Key data 2025/26

Pupils on Roll - 175 (Reception to Year 6)

Nursery - 18 plus 7 Risers.

Whole School Attendance - 92.4%
Roman Catholic - 28%
Eligible Free School Meals - 22.4%
EAL/Multilingual - 25.2%
Additional Learning Needs - 3%

Exclusions - 1 Pupil Exclusion during the Academic Year.

Destination of Leavers - Bishop Hedley Campus (BCA), St. Alban's R.C. High School, Brynmawr Foundation School, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Crickhowell High School.

ALN

The school's policy for the identification, assessment and provision for pupils with additional learning needs is consistent with the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (approved by the Senedd on 23rd March 2021) under section 4 of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

The school's Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCo's) work closely with all other members of staff to ensure that individual educational plans are developed and implemented to meet the needs of pupils. The ALNCo's also liaise with all members of staff, to ensure that the progress of all pupils is regularly monitored and assessed and to ensure that each pupil reaches his or her potential.

During the academic year 2025/2026 12 pupils were in receipt of an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Welsh Language

Welsh continues to have a high profile at St. Mary's with Welsh being taught in both discreet lessons and across the curriculum throughout the school. During the course of the day pupils are encouraged to use the Welsh language in classrooms, corridors, and on the playgrounds. In order to further develop the Welsh language our staff also use incidental Welsh as part of their interaction with the children. Classes operate daily Helpur Heddiw Sessions with pupils leading Oracy throughout the day. Our Annual Eisteddfod took place in March, Staff and pupils used this opportunity to celebrate our Patron saint, our language and the culture of our nation.

Extra-Curricular Activities, Community and Parish Links

Pupils across the school have had the opportunity to attend county and cluster sporting events, (including football, netball, rugby, swimming, athletics and multi-skills). Pupils also attended and took part in a range musical and theatrical performances at local theatres and our feeder school.

We continue to support a range of charities - at Harvest and Christmas, pupils donated food hampers for the Food Bank in Blaenau Gwent. This year we have supported Hospice of the Valleys, CAFOD, The Royal British Legion, MacMillan and Children in Need. We thank Parents for their continued support. Pupils attend Mass at St. Mary's R.C. Church each Friday and Mr Buckley led the Sacramental programme for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. We celebrated a lovely First Holy Communion Mass in July with our wider parish family.

Promoting Healthy Eating and a Healthy Lifestyle

Our school is committed to promoting healthy eating habits and fostering a lifestyle centred around well-being. As a school, we are committed to following the healthy eating guidelines provided by the Local Authority and Welsh Government.

Our Free Breakfast Club offers children a healthy breakfast and continues to be very successful with at least 60 children attending each morning. As part of their daily classroom routines all pupils are given a range of opportunities that aim to develop and promote a healthy lifestyle, positive social interactions and constructive play.

Toilet Facilities

The school provides safe, clean, and accessible toilet facilities for pupils and staff. Toilet facilities are kept clean and are well-maintained. Any issues that arise with the toilets during the school day are swiftly dealt with by staff.

Appropriate facilities are provided for pupils of different age groups. Toilets are private with partitions and locks on cubicle doors. The school ensures compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines regarding health and safety, accessibility, and hygiene standards. During break times and lunchtime, toilets are supervised by a member of staff.

Financial Statement 2025/2026

Funding - £1,220,017 (including £55,477)

25/26 Closing Budget - £14,491

26/27 Funding - £1,250,072

26/27 Predicted Surplus/Deficit - -£38,060

ALN Funding - £100,241

Grant	Source	Allocation
School Support Networking	LASIS	£5,000
Standards	Local Authority	£96,406
Professional Learning	Local Authority	£4,756
ALN Implementation	Local Authority	£4,787
Pupil Deprivation Grant	Local Authority	£56,473
Early Years PDG	Local Authority	£10,350

Funding Source	Amount	Activity
PDG	£11,949	Partial staff costs (30%) for CB to deliver THRIVE wellbeing interventions for eligible pupils.
PDG	£7,454	Partial staff costs (30%) for CG to deliver THRIVE wellbeing interventions for eligible pupils.
PDG	£7454	Partial staff costs (30%) for CT to deliver ELSA wellbeing interventions for eligible pupils.
PDG	£9,504	Partial staff costs (30%) for KT to deliver ELSA wellbeing interventions for eligible pupils.
PDG	£11,750	Partial staff costs (35%) for CC to deliver Numeracy/Maths & Literacy/Reading/Phonics interventions to eligible pupils
PDG	£2,000	Partial costs (50%) for whole school 'Restorative Approach' Professional Learning.

PDG	£3,000	Release/cover costs for staff to observe high-quality independent learning practice within and beyond the school.
PDG	£1,000	Transport costs to ensure that all pupils' from Year 1 to Year 6 are able to attend swimming sessions.
PDG	£1,800	To increase participation, engagement and confidence in physical activity for all eligible pupils
EYPDG	£4,969	Partial staff costs (20%) for SJ to deliver Social & Emotional and Oracy interventions to eligible pupils
EYPDG	£1,200	To purchase high quality resources and equipment that promotes independence, exploration and child-initiated learning in Early Years.
EYPDG	£4969	Partial staff costs (20%) for CT to deliver literacy interventions (phonics and reading) for eligible pupils.
Standards	£42,644	Increase staffing capacity (4 x 50% TA costs) to improve the staff to pupil ratio, enabling more targeted support, higher standards of learning and teaching and enhanced pupil skills development.
Standards	£26,322	Partial staff costs (2 x 50%) for Year 1 and 2 TA's to provide in class support that raises standards and accelerates progress in reading, writing and numeracy.
Standards	£11,750	Partial staff costs (35%) for CC to deliver Numeracy/Maths & Literacy/Reading/Phonics interventions.
Standards	£200	Digital Den subscription
Standards	£800	Magister RE resources
Standards	£185	TenTen RSE and Worship resources
Standards	£4,178	Costs to improve digital equitable access across the school through the purchase of additional IT hardware.
School Support Networking	£2,000	Partial costs (50%) for whole school 'Trauma Informed Schools' Professional Learning (development of a cluster approach to promoting

		positive behaviour) and release time for Wellbeing Lead.
School Support Networking	£2,000	supply/cover costs to enable staff to observe and work alongside LA partners to develop the impact of Teaching and Learning experiences.
School Support Networking	£1,000	Supply/cover costs to enable leaders at all levels to observe and work alongside LA partners to continue to develop the accuracy and effectiveness of self-evaluation processes.
Professional Learning	£2,250	Professional Learning costs to enable staff to access high quality, high impact professional learning focussing on Independent Learning, pupil Wellbeing and leadership.
Professional Learning	£2,750	Supply/Staff costs to enable staff to collaborate directly with external partners and peer professionals to support the development of Independent Learning.
ALN Implementation	£1,698	Supply/Staff costs for the ALNCo to attend LA events and statutory meetings.
ALN Implementation	£1,698	Supply/Staff costs for ALNCo to perform structured, in-class pupil and peer observations across the school
ALN Implementation	£1,698	Fund targeted release time for ALNCo to deliver 1-to-1 instructional coaching, mentoring, and practical training sessions directly with school staff.

PDG Spend 25/26

Action	Grant	Cost	Impact
To provide Thrive support for emotional wellbeing. To provide interventions for emotional wellbeing. ELSA and THRIVE. This will include training for relevant staff if required.	CLA Cluster	£3,971	Most pupils develop a stronger understanding of their emotions and demonstrate improved self-regulation. As a result, they engage more positively in their learning and show increased resilience when facing challenges. Most pupils who receive targeted ELSA or Thrive support make notable improvements in their emotional wellbeing and confidence. They form positive relationships with their peers and adults,

			contributing to a calm and nurturing learning environment. Nearly all staff apply consistent strategies to promote pupils' emotional wellbeing through the Jigsaw programme. This helps to create a whole-school culture where pupils feel safe, valued and ready to learn. Most pupils, particularly those identified as vulnerable or with additional learning needs, benefit from the structured emotional support provided through ELSA, Thrive and Jigsaw. As a result, they show improved attendance, engagement and readiness to learn across the curriculum.
1 x partial staff costs to improve literacy (phonics /reading) and Social Speaking group sessions	EYPDG	£19,373	Many pupils showed accelerated progress in phonics phases, decoding accuracy and reading fluency, with assessments evidencing stronger foundational literacy skills. Many pupils participating in oracy groups demonstrated improved confidence when speaking in class, contributing to discussions more willingly and using a wider, more expressive vocabulary. Increased reading enjoyment and motivation were observed across groups, with many pupils showing greater independence in choosing reading materials and engaging positively in guided reading. Many targeted pupils transferred skills from intervention sessions into classroom tasks, resulting in noticeable improvements in writing and overall communication.
4 x partial staff costs to deliver academic and wellbeing interventions Rapid Reading Phonics Interventions (including RWI) SpLD interventions	PDG	£58,593	Most pupils receiving targeted literacy, numeracy and SpLD interventions made at least appropriate progress from baseline assessments, with many closing identified gaps or moving closer to age-expected levels. Most pupils engaged in ELSA, THRIVE and Lego Therapy demonstrated

Rapid Maths ELSA THRIVE Lego Therapy			improved emotional regulation, reduced behavioural incidents and greater readiness to learn, as reported by class teachers. Pupil wellbeing surveys and case studies show increased confidence, resilience and positive relationships with trusted adults (for most pupils). Attendance and engagement improved for many vulnerable pupils, including CLA and those with ALN, resulting in more stable learning routines. Regular review of intervention data enabled early identification of pupils needing additional support, ensuring timely adjustments and improved outcomes across the year. Strong collaboration between intervention staff and teachers enhanced consistency of provision and contributed to a whole-school culture of nurture and inclusion.
Eco Club to attend Eco events - Augusta house Ebbw Vale to help residents and the community with gardening/Eco projects and the Eco Awards Ceremony	PDG	£500	Pupils developed a strong sense of responsibility and pride through leading environmental projects that visibly improved local spaces and strengthened community links, especially with Augusta House residents. Participation boosted self-esteem, teamwork and leadership, with pupils confidently representing the school at the Eco Awards Ceremony. Projects enhanced cross-curricular learning, with pupils applying scientific, geographical and RE understanding to real-world contexts. Pupil voice strengthened as children contributed opinions, ideas and solutions that shaped environmental work across the school.

Travel costs for all pupils from Reception to Year 6 to attend swimming lessons.	PDG	£2,500	All pupils accessed swimming lessons regardless of financial circumstance, removing cost barriers and ensuring equitable participation. Confidence in the water increased for nearly all pupils, with many achieving National Curriculum expectations or making significant progress toward them. Behaviour, focus and emotional wellbeing improved on swimming days for many pupils, contributing to positive attitudes and healthy lifestyles. Families reported increased confidence in their children's safety around water, reinforcing swimming as an essential life skill.
All pupils from Nursery to Year 6 to attend Sports sessions - Next Gen Academy	PDG	£800	Most pupils across all year groups showed improvements in coordination, balance, agility and fundamental movement skills, contributing to healthier physical development. Regular participation in structured sport strengthened social skills such as cooperation, turn-taking and teamwork, with a positive knock-on effect in classroom behaviour. Many pupils demonstrated greater self-confidence, resilience and a willingness to attempt new activities. Engagement was high among disadvantaged learners, contributing to more positive attitudes toward physical activity and improved wellbeing. The consistent programme supported inclusive access, with pupils with ALN or physical needs actively participating and achieving personal milestones.

2026/27 Calendar

Date	Start	Half Term Starts	Half Term Ends	Term Ends
Autumn	01/09/2026	26/10/2026	30/10/2026	18/12/2026
Spring	04/01/2027	08/02/2027	12/02/2027	19/03/2027
Summer	05/04/2027	31/05/2027	04/06/2027	20/07/2027

May Day - Monday 3rd May 2027