

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Special measures

St Mary's R.C. Primary School

**Union Street
Carmarthen
SA31 3DE**

Date of visit: September 2025

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

Outcome of visit

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Establish stable and effective leadership, with the capacity to secure the improvement identified in the report

The school has secured a stable and effective teaching and leadership team, which has brought greater consistency in expectations for behaviour and learning across the school. Nearly all pupils behave well, are polite and engage enthusiastically in their learning. Positive changes to the school's culture and provision now means that, increasingly, pupils are beginning to make improved progress in many aspects of their learning.

The acting headteacher and governors work purposefully in collaboration with the local authority and the diocese. They review the impact of actions taken to address the recommendations regularly. Together, they have delegated clear responsibilities and leadership roles to staff and governors, which has strengthened capacity to drive school improvement. The role of the governing body in supporting senior leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work is developing well.

School leaders have implemented a comprehensive timetable to monitor and evaluate many aspects of the school's work. They undertake evaluation work well to identify strengths and next steps. Link governors visit the school to gain a better understanding of the impact that teaching has on progress in learning. Governors' understanding of effective provision and pupil progress continues to develop well.

Teachers engage in purposeful professional learning that aligns closely with school improvement priorities. These activities are improving teaching and pupil progress. For

example, professional learning focused on developing writing skills has enabled teachers to help older pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

The school collaborates effectively with other local schools to gain valuable insight into strategic school improvement planning. This has strengthened the acting headteacher's understanding of school improvement processes. Leaders have established a successful model for planning and implementing school improvement. This has accelerated the pace of change.

R2. Improve the quality of the teaching and learning experiences pupils receive so that they make the progress they are capable of

Since the core inspection, leaders and staff have developed a comprehensive curriculum that maps skills appropriately and includes a useful planning overview. This has helped to secure a consistent approach to planning. Teachers plan a wide range of learning activities and experiences that focus on the development of specific skills, knowledge and understanding progressively. These activities engage pupils in authentic contexts and take good account of the locality and the lives of the pupils.

Staff establish and maintain positive working relationships with pupils. They set high expectations for pupils' progress and support and challenge them well. Overall, these raised expectations and improved teaching ensure that pupils make the progress they are capable of. Teachers organise classrooms flexibly and adapt the pace of learning skilfully. This means that they can offer a range of challenges that suit the needs of pupils of different ages and at different stages in their development. Nearly all pupils engage well in lessons and persevere when facing challenges. Staff provide suitable feedback to pupils as they work. This helps them to understand what they have done well and challenges them to improve their work or think more deeply about aspects of their learning.

Across the school, the learning environment is now attractive, stimulating and purposeful. Classrooms are well resourced, and materials are easily accessible to pupils. This encourages them to develop their independent learning skills. The use of the school's outdoor learning areas remains limited.

R3. Develop provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills

The school has developed a useful overview to support teachers in planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills. Teachers have a secure understanding of individual pupils' skills in literacy and mathematics, and this helps them to plan for their next steps in learning. In most cases, they provide effective feedback to help pupils understand what they have achieved and how they can improve. This is particularly the case for older pupils who use feedback from teachers and their peers with increasing skill to reflect on and edit their writing.

Teachers have increased opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills. They encourage all pupils to speak to one another purposefully during formal learning activities and in relaxed, informal situations. Pupils now apply their speaking and listening skills more effectively to support their learning, for example to explain their reasoning when solving problems.

Younger pupils develop an early interest in reading through listening to stories and sharing books with others. Older pupils enjoy reading in class, individually, with their peers or with an adult. Staff work closely with small groups of pupils to help them to develop specific reading skills. These include reading aloud with expression, and extending their understanding of content, style and genre. These experiences build reading skills effectively by encouraging them to consider their reading material more deeply.

The school has established a clear and effective structure for the progressive development of pupils' writing skills. This ensures that, over time, most pupils develop a secure understanding of the features of different genres and apply this knowledge skilfully to produce extended pieces of work across the curriculum.

Effective leadership has led to improvements in the teaching and learning of Welsh. Younger pupils respond to simple instructions in Welsh and answer basic questions enthusiastically as part of their daily routines. In a very short time, older pupils have developed more positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. They enjoy learning the language through playing games, singing songs and engaging in activities that motivate them to use the language more frequently.

Teachers plan practical activities that help pupils visualise and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. The youngest pupils build a sound awareness of number through structured play and focused tasks. By Year 2, most pupils use their number knowledge appropriately. As they move through the school, most develop confidence in their mathematical skills and make good progress in lessons and over time. They are beginning to apply this knowledge effectively to solve problems in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum, for example when calculating a suitable scale to represent the populations of different countries.

The youngest pupils use digital devices independently to practise and strengthen their reading and mathematical skills. Staff provide structured opportunities for older pupils to develop a suitable range of digital skills that support their learning across the curriculum. These pupils use the internet safely to research information and present their work clearly and creatively using digital tools. Senior leaders recognise the need to enhance pupils' digital experiences so that all pupils develop a broad and well-balanced set of digital skills for future learning.

R4. Improve attendance and establish a positive culture around the importance and value of being in school

Staff have worked strategically in partnership with the local authority to improve attendance. There are suitable arrangements to monitor rates of attendance and to identify pupils and families in need of support. Staff develop strong working relationships with families and provide helpful information about external support when needed. Staff celebrate good attendance in newsletters, displays and whole school assemblies.

These strategies, alongside the considerable improvements in teaching and learning, have contributed to notable improvements in attendance. Overall, most pupils attend school regularly and on time.