



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**St Alban's R.C. Primary School
Mona Place
Tremorfa
Cardiff
CF24 2TG**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

St Alban's R.C. Primary School is in the Tremorfa area of the City of Cardiff. The school provides a Catholic primary education for pupils between four and eleven years of age. There are currently 215 pupils on roll. The number of pupils at the school has risen by about 10% over the past six years.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher of the school were both on suspension prior to and during the inspection. In May 2011, the local authority seconded a Cardiff headteacher to act as interim headteacher at the school. Since September 2011, another existing Cardiff headteacher has taken over as the interim headteacher. The acting deputy headteacher has been in post for two years. Three teachers, from other local primary schools, were seconded to the school at the time of the inspection. The chair of governors resigned in October 2011 and the vice chair is the interim chair of governors.

Many pupils come from socially and economically disadvantaged homes and around 50% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. This is well above the all-Wales average of around 20%. Just over 75% of pupils' ethnic background is white British. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of ethnic groups. The school has a growing number of pupils from Gypsy and Traveller and Czech Roma backgrounds. Around 10% of pupils speak English as a second language. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

Twenty-two per cent of pupils have additional learning needs. A majority of these pupils are at the school action level for moderate learning difficulties. Five pupils have statements of special educational need.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Alban's R.C. Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,738 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Cardiff is £19,708 and the minimum is £2,828. St Alban's R.C. Primary School is 37th out of the 116 primary schools in Cardiff in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Unsatisfactory
The school's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory

Current performance

The current performance of the school is unsatisfactory because:

- pupils' standards in English and mathematics are in need of significant improvement;
- across the curriculum, too few pupils make enough progress in developing their skills;
- the range of learning experiences do not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum; and
- strategic partnerships are not secure.

Prospects for improvement

The interim leadership team have improved:

- standards and provision for pupils with additional learning needs;
- pupils' behaviour and attendance;
- provision for guided group reading;
- professional development opportunities for all staff;
- the external accommodation;
- staff and governor relationships; and
- self-evaluation procedures.

However, prospects for improvement remain unsatisfactory because:

- there have been systemic failures at all levels of leadership and management over a lengthy period;
- there are on-going uncertainties regarding the governance, leadership and management of the school;
- self-evaluation procedures are not embedded in the everyday life of the school;
- middle leaders have not had enough support in order to carry out their roles effectively; and
- professional development opportunities for staff have been limited.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards in English and mathematics;
- R2 improve pupils' ability to use their communication, numeracy, ICT, thinking and problem solving skills;
- R3 continue to improve pupils' attendance;
- R4 plan a curriculum that meets statutory requirements and provides opportunities for pupils to practice their skills across all subjects;
- R5 provide high quality professional development opportunities for all staff;
- R6 improve strategic leadership at all levels; and
- R7 embed self-evaluation processes that involve all staff and are based on a rigorous review of first hand evidence.

What happens next?

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

Pupils' performance at the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is weak when compared to that of similar schools. Overall, many pupils do not make enough progress and do not achieve as well as they should. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

A few pupils begin school with below expected levels in speaking and listening. Through well targeted support, most of these pupils make good progress. In general in the Foundation Phase, pupils' listening skills are appropriate, although a significant minority find it difficult to maintain concentration in lessons. Most pupils willingly talk to adults and are keen to engage in conversation. By Year 6, many pupils listen well to the opinions of their peers, take part in discussions and express their opinions. Concentration and focus remain issues for a few pupils.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, a majority of pupils make appropriate progress in developing their reading skills. However, many pupils do not have a secure enough understanding of phonics and have a limited range of strategies when faced with unfamiliar words. Pupils' progress in reading is uneven across the school. By the time pupils reach Year 6, too few are reading at the expected level. Although more able pupils are able to read a range of texts and discuss plot and characters, they do not apply their reading skills well enough across the curriculum. The school has very recently introduced a structured guided reading strategy. This is already improving pupils' confidence in reading.

Pupils' skills in writing are weak across the school. By the end of the Foundation Phase, more able pupils write in simple sentences but do not have a secure enough understanding of sentence structure, regular spelling patterns or simple grammar. Many pupils in key stage 2 do not make consistent progress in developing their writing skills. A significant minority of pupils misspell common words and find it difficult to structure their work or extend their ideas. In both key stages, pupils' ability to write at length is constrained by lack of opportunities to write for a purpose across the curriculum.

Pupils' skills in numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) are underdeveloped. Pupils rarely apply these skills to real-life problems or situations, or in other curricular areas.

Many pupils with additional learning needs who receive additional support with their reading and others who receive support with English as an additional language programmes make good progress from their starting points. The school has recently introduced a mathematics catch-up group and extended their programme of reading support. Although these programmes are in their very early stages, they are already beginning to improve pupils' standards. However, a majority of able and more able pupils do not reach their full potential in reading, writing or mathematics.

Pupils enjoy using the Welsh language in everyday situations. They confidently use simple phrases although they find it difficult to extend conversations to include other basic sentence patterns. Across the school, pupils do not make enough progress in reading and writing in Welsh.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to maintain a healthy life style. Many take part in after school sports clubs and know about the importance of taking regular exercise.

Pupils completed learner questionnaires at the beginning of term and repeated them just prior to the inspection. Their responses indicate that, although a few pupils occasionally disrupt the learning of others, behaviour both in classes and at break times has improved significantly. Most pupils feel safe in school and agree that staff deal well with any instances of bullying .

Attendance levels are unsatisfactory and are consistently below the average for similar school and the Wales average. There are high levels of unauthorised absence and a minority of pupils are regularly late for school. Recently, the school has focused on raising pupils levels of attendance and punctuality. Data for this term already shows a marked improvement in both attendance and punctuality when compared to previous years.

The school council is appropriately constituted and members enthusiastically contribute their ideas. They have influenced the purchase of new playground equipment and have helped to design new markings for the yard. However, the school council is overly directed by adults and does not provide a voice for all pupils in the school.

Most pupils show care, respect and concern for others. Older pupils take their roles as prefects and head boy and head girl seriously. When given the opportunity, many pupils co-operate well and know how to improve aspects of their learning. However, provision for pupils to work with others and to develop their thinking and problem solving skills is weak. As a result, pupils' skills in these areas are underdeveloped.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Unsatisfactory

Planning to meet the needs of all pupils in mainstream classes is not well developed. As a result, a many pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. There is an over reliance on work sheets and low level activities. Recently introduced additional learning programmes in literacy and numeracy are generally well planned and are beginning to impact on the standards achieved by pupils requiring additional support.

The Foundation Phase curriculum is generally appropriate and usually engages pupils' interests. The use of the outdoor spaces to enhance the curriculum is not planned for well enough. At key stage 2, the range of learning experiences does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The school does not

currently have an overview of all pupils' learning experiences. As a result, work set for pupils does not build well enough on their existing knowledge and skills.

Planning for the development of pupils' communication, numeracy, ICT, thinking and problem solving skills across all areas of the curriculum is limited.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship and opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales are not embedded in the curriculum.

Teachers effectively promote the use of incidental Welsh across the school. However, insufficient time is given to promoting the subject of Welsh second language.

The school has recently introduced a wider range of stimulating extra-curricular activities such as the 'Glee Club'. These opportunities are much appreciated by pupils and have added greatly to their learning experiences.

Teaching: Adequate

In most lessons there are good working relationships between staff and pupils and behaviour is well managed. Usually learning objectives are shared and teachers use a beneficial range of resources and activities to stimulate pupils' interest. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed and make a good contribution to improving pupils' understanding of tasks. All staff promote incidental Welsh effectively.

In a significant minority of lessons, work is not suitably challenging and as a result pupils do not make enough progress. The pace of lessons is often too slow and a few pupils lose concentration. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not allow pupils enough independence and overly direct the learning. This means that pupils do not have enough opportunities to think for themselves or be creative.

Recent professional development opportunities for staff are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching. This is especially evident in the guided group reading sessions.

Staff have also received recent training on how to analyse pupil performance data. Many teachers now have an improved understanding of how to monitor pupils' progress and how to use the information to plan activities that better match learning needs.

Marking is generally good. Most teachers give positive feedback to pupils and provide constructive criticism which helps the pupils to improve their work. Assessment for learning strategies are used well across the school and pupils are enthusiastic when given the opportunity to assess their own progress. Most pupils know their individual literacy target and this enables them to focus on areas they need to improve.

Teachers' end of key stage assessments are generally accurate. The school has recently introduced a system to track pupils' progress. Although in its very early stages, the system identifies effectively groups of pupils in need of additional support.

Reports to parents are informative and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school's provision to promote pupils' health and wellbeing is satisfactory. The recent introduction of a wellbeing survey has enabled the school to identify more effectively how to better provide for vulnerable pupils.

The school promotes well pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Although pupils have had opportunities to learn about a few other cultures, for example the Gypsy and Traveller Community, the provision for pupils' cultural development is not embedded through the curriculum.

The school's recent focus on improving pupil behaviour has already impacted positively on standards. All staff consistently follow the agreed positive behaviour policy and pupils are aware of the school's expectations.

The school is active in working with a range of external support agencies. Working with these agencies, the school provides appropriate provision for identified pupils.

The school's previous systems to identify pupils with additional learning and language needs were not far reaching enough. As a result, not all pupils with additional learning needs received the necessary support. The recently introduced systems are far more robust and effective in identifying pupils in needing additional help. Generally, it is too early to judge the impact of the new systems on pupils' standards. However, some of the catch-up groups have already improved the standard of targeted pupils, especially in numeracy. Pupils' individual education plans are child friendly and identify appropriate steps in order to bring about improvements in learning.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Adequate

The Catholic nature of the school is fully reflected in its ethos. The school is inclusive and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. A new policy in line with the latest equalities act has recently been shared with the governing body and staff. However, staff have not yet had appropriate training in this area and aspects of the curriculum promoting diversity is underdeveloped. The school appropriately monitors and reports any racial incidents.

Teaching and learning areas are generally well maintained. There is sufficient space and storage for the number of pupils on roll. Toilet facilities, including provision for disabled pupils, are good.

Although displays in classrooms and in public areas are attractive they do not always support pupils' learning well enough.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase have access to generally well equipped outside areas. The key stage 2 yard has been resurfaced and playground markings added. Pupils are very appreciative of this recent development. However, the outdoor environment both in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is underdeveloped.

The school has recently purchased many additional resources, including outside resources for the Foundation Phase, new reading books and ICT software. As a result, resources are now sufficient to meet the learning needs of pupils.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory
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Leadership: Unsatisfactory

The recently appointed interim headteacher has successfully focused the school on raising pupils' standards and improving the quality of provision. She has had a significant impact on improving aspects of provision and standards. For example, pupils' attendance and behaviour, teaching and provision for pupils with additional learning needs have all improved. However, as she has only been in post for a short period of time, pupils' standards of achievement and progress remain unsatisfactory.

Over a three year period there have been systemic failures in strategic leadership, management and governance. As a result, senior leaders and governors have not communicated a clear vision for the school. Staff have not been given enough direction, guidance or opportunities to keep up to date with recent developments in teaching and learning. Leadership, at all levels, has not paid enough attention to raising pupils' standards. The on-going uncertainties regarding the school's leadership is having an unsettling effect on staff and parents.

Teachers with additional responsibilities are now more involved in shaping the direction of the school and monitoring standards. However, opportunities for them to learn about their roles and responsibilities as middle leaders have been very limited. Performance management has not always addressed individual or whole staff needs well enough.

The governing body has many recently appointed members. The interim headteacher has established good working relationships with the governing body and the acting chairperson. All statutory policies and committees are now in place. Governors are very supportive of the school and are willing to challenge the school about the standards it achieves and the quality of provision.

The school has not addressed local or national priorities well enough. It has not given enough focus on improving standards in literacy, or to the requirements of the School Effectiveness Framework. The school has implemented aspects of the Foundation Phase well. However, not all staff have had enough training or support to be as effective as they could be.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The local authority and interim headteacher have worked with staff to develop self-evaluation processes and procedures. However, self-evaluation has not been a regular part of the school's life and is in the very early stages of development. The self-evaluation report is a generally accurate document but it does not always correctly reflect the school's position or draw on a wide enough range of first hand evidence.

Over time, leaders and managers have not always accurately identified areas for improvement. The planning for and monitoring of, school improvement has not been rigorous enough. Improvements over recent years are minimal and, consequently, many pupils do not make enough progress.

The current school development plan is very well written and identifies the main areas the school is aiming to improve. Responsibilities, actions, timescales and procedures for monitoring progress are clearly set out. All staff are aware of the school's priorities for improvement and their role in bringing about the desired results.

The school has made unsatisfactory progress in addressing many of the recommendations in the last inspection report.

Until recently, staff have not been well supported in their professional development. Most staff have not been involved in sharing good practice either within or beyond the school.

Partnership working: Unsatisfactory

The school's work with a range of partners in order to improve pupils' standards and wellbeing is underdeveloped. There are very few secure strategic partnerships.

Relationships between the school and the majority of parents are improving, but from a low base. In the inspection parents' meeting, a few parents say they feel uncomfortable approaching the school with their concerns. However, since the appointment of the interim headteacher, parents are becoming more involved in the working life of the school.

The interim leadership team has recently established positive links with the local community, including local businesses and voluntary agencies. This has resulted in new planters and signage in the school grounds. However, these partnerships are in their early stages and have yet to have an impact on the standards of the pupils or their wellbeing.

The school is now working closely with the local authority to bring about improvements in standards, provision and leadership.

There are good transitional links with local nursery and comprehensive schools. However, these links have not been developed at a strategic level to ensure continuity and consistency in learning experiences.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The school has an appropriate number of qualified teaching staff. However, at the time of the inspection, three teachers and the interim headteacher were seconded from their substantive posts in other Cardiff schools. Support staff are effectively deployed across the school. The number of support staff in the Foundation Phase is just below the Welsh Government's recommended adult to pupil ratio.

The school has not always prioritised its spending efficiently or allocated enough of its budget to improving resources for pupils. Spending decisions have not been

linked well enough to priorities for whole school improvement. Outdoor spaces are underdeveloped, especially for key stage 2 pupils.

In view of the unsatisfactory progress made by many pupils and the long standing weaknesses in leadership and governance, the school overall provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Estyn compares schools against two main data sets; their free-school-meal group and their family of schools.

Free-school-meal groups – the results of every school in Wales are compared to those of schools who have similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. There are five bands: (1) up to and including 8%; (2) over 8% and up to and including 16%; (3) over 16% and up to and including 24%; (4) over 24% and up to and including 32%; and (5) above 32%.

Within each of the bands, schools are placed in quartiles in order to judge their performance.

Family of schools – a group of between ten and twelve schools across Wales that have similar characteristics and face similar challenges, in terms of the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, socio-economic factors, Welsh deprivation factoring and numbers of pupils with additional learning needs. Each school's performance is ranked against that of others in its family.

St Alban's R.C. Primary School is in the fifth band for the proportion of its pupils entitled to free school meals.

Overall, pupils do not achieve as well as they could and their level of attainment is often too low.

In key stage 1, compared to schools in Wales with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is generally in the lower 50% of schools for the core subject indicator (the expected level at seven years of age in all three of the individual subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination), English and science and the bottom 25% for mathematics.

In key stage 2, for the past four years in relation to the core subject indicator (the expected level at 11 years of age in all three of the individual subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination), the school been in the lower 50% when compared to similar schools. It has been in the lowest 25% of schools for two of these years. For English, the school has been in the lower 50% when compared to similar schools for three of the past four years and in the lowest 25% for two of these years. In mathematics and science pupils' performance has been in the lowest 25% of that for schools for the past three years.

Pupils' performance at the expected levels at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is weak when compared to the situation in schools in Wales with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In key stage 1, in English, mathematics and science, pupils' performance at the higher level generally compares well with the performance of pupils in similar

schools. In key stage 2, pupils' performance at the higher levels in all three subjects is poor. Too few pupils achieve the higher level 5.

Compared to its family of schools group, pupils' performance at the expected level at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is not as good as it should be. Pupils' performance at the higher level 3 at key stage 1 generally compares well with the performance of pupils in the family. In key stage 2, pupils' performance at the higher level in English is satisfactory when compared to that of other schools in the family. However, pupils' performance at the higher level in mathematics and science is poor.

In key stage 1, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In key stage 2, girls generally attain better than boys but the gap is not significant and is generally lower than the averages for the family of schools, the local authority and Wales as a whole.

Over the past two years, in key stage 1, the performance of the group of pupils entitled to free school meals has been above that of pupils not entitled to free school meals. However, in the same period at key stage 2, the group of pupils entitled to free school meals has performed significantly less well than other pupils.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaire due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).

Thirteen parents attended the meeting for parents. Most were unhappy with the standards achieved by pupils, the provision for pupils with additional learning needs and the on-going uncertainties regarding the leadership and management of the school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-five pupils completed the learner questionnaire.

Nearly all of these pupils feel safe in school, think that the school deals well with any instances of bullying and know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. All pupils agree that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn, know what to do if they are finding work hard and think they have enough resources to help them learn. Most pupils think the school teaches them how to be healthy and that there are lots of chances for regular exercise. Most pupils agree that homework helps them to understand and improve their school work. Many pupils think others behave well in the classroom and at playtime and lunch time.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Liz Miles	Reporting Inspector
Mike Munting	Team Inspector
Mrs R Boardman	Lay Inspector
Mr J Evans	Peer Inspector
Mrs E Counsell	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11