

## **RE-INSPECTION**

**OF**

**Mary Immaculate High School  
Caerau Lane  
Wenvoe  
Cardiff  
CF5 5QZ**

**SCHOOL NUMBER: 6814607**

**DATE OF INSPECTION: January 2011**

Mary Immaculate High School was inspected in May 2009 and judged as requiring significant improvement. As part of the Welsh Assembly Government's requirements for schools requiring significant improvement, Estyn undertook a follow-up inspection in January 2011 focusing on the key issues identified in the Section 28 inspection.

### **Outcome of the re-inspection**

Mary Immaculate High School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection in May 2009. As a result of this progress Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

The school has made good progress with most of the recommendations of the Section 28 report, though there is still room for further improvement. Progress against each recommendation is described below.

### **Recommendation 1: raise standards of achievement by addressing the important shortcomings in all subjects graded 3 or 4**

The school has made good progress towards meeting this recommendation. In 2010, results in both key stage 3 and key stage 4 show a significant improvement in several key indicators.

At key stage 3, the school is now in the top half of similar schools for the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 in English, science and the core subject indicator. Mathematics results at level 5 or above remain in the bottom half of similar schools. The school's core subject indicator was also slightly higher than the average for its family of schools. English results at level 5 or above were also higher than the family of schools. Mathematics and science results were in line with family averages.

The school has improved its performance at the level 1 threshold and level 2 threshold, in key stage 4, as well as the average wider points score in 2010. These

improvements now place the school in the bottom half of similar schools rather than the bottom quarter at the time of the Section 28 inspection. The level 2 threshold has increased by 26 percentage points. The school is now above the family average. The level 2 threshold including English and mathematics improved by 14 percentage points, but this still places the school in the bottom quarter of similar schools. English results at level 2 are significantly higher than the family average and place the school in the top half of similar schools. Although mathematics and science results at level 2 have improved significantly since the Section 28 inspection, they are still below family and Wales averages.

The inspection team observed 21 lessons during the monitoring visit. This sample is different from the Section 28 inspection as inspectors concentrated on subjects identified as having important shortcomings. The following table summarises the grades inspectors awarded to standards of achievement:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number	3	9	7	2	0
Percentage	14%	43%	33%	10%	0

Standards were judged to be good or better in 57% of lessons. This figure shows a 12 percentage point improvement since the Section 28 inspection. The proportion of lessons with important shortcomings has also decreased.

In those lessons graded 2 or better, the most common good features are that most pupils:

- ask and answer questions in detail, extending their knowledge and understanding;
- are confident, well-motivated and engage in tasks with enthusiasm;
- work well in pairs and small groups;
- demonstrate independence in organising their learning;
- make good progress in acquiring skills, according to their abilities; and
- understand and use assessment criteria to help them improve their work and that of their peers.

In the few lessons where there were significant shortcomings in achievement:

- pupils do not sustain their concentration and application when tasks are undemanding;
- pupils do not develop their ability to think and give extended responses to tasks; and
- pupils of different ability levels do not progress as well as expected.

**Recommendation 2: improve the quality of teaching and assessment by addressing the shortcomings identified within the report**

The school has made good progress in addressing this recommendation by implementing a wide range of effective strategies to improve teaching and assessment.

In the 21 lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number	3	11	6	1	0
Percentage	14%	53%	28%	5%	0

There is a 21 percentage point increase in the proportion of lessons graded 2 or better from the last inspection and the proportion of lessons graded 3 or 4 has decreased significantly.

The good and outstanding features observed in lessons include:

- teaching strategies that engage, motivate and enthuse pupils;
- high expectations of pupils and challenging tasks to promote pupils' thinking;
- clear explanations of lesson objectives, well matched to assessment criteria and pupils' abilities;
- very good questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and responses; and
- resources that effectively meet the needs of all pupils.

In the minority of lessons that have important shortcomings, these include:

- a lack of activities to probe pupils' understanding;
- a narrow range of questioning; and
- weak planning to cater for pupils of all abilities.

Teachers have shared good practice in marking and many teachers now give pupils clear written advice. However, this good practice is still not consistent across the school. An increased focus on pupil self-assessment means that pupils are now clearer about how to improve. Most pupils know their target level or grade and understand how their progress is monitored.

### **Recommendation 3 - work in partnership with the local authority, parents and carers, and the wider community to develop and implement further strategies in order to improve attendance**

The school is making good progress towards meeting this recommendation.

Since the last inspection, attendance has improved by two percentage points. Despite this improvement, attendance remains in the bottom quarter when compared to similar schools. Unverified data shows a further two percentage point improvement since September 2010.

The school is using effective strategies to improve attendance, including working with a wide range of partners. All staff now understand their roles and responsibilities in improving attendance. An extended range of learning courses is successful in engaging previously hard-to-reach groups of pupils.

**Recommendation 4: Improve the extent to which the senior leadership team challenge and hold accountable those they manage**

**Recommendation 5: Improve the consistency and overall effectiveness of middle leadership**

The school has made very good progress towards meeting these recommendations.

The new senior leadership team has improved the school's capacity to raise standards. With strong leadership from the headteacher, it provides rigorous challenge and a clear direction to staff and pupils. The senior leadership team has well-defined responsibilities and a shared vision for school improvement.

Communication in the school at all levels is effective. Senior leaders provide good opportunities for staff to share best practice. They also challenge underperformance rigorously. All staff are now fully accountable for improving standards and the quality of teaching.

The senior leadership team provides effective support for middle leaders. Regular line management meetings have a clear focus on raising standards. These have improved the consistency and effectiveness of middle leaders. Working in collaboration with local schools, the school has an appropriate programme to develop the skills of middle leaders.

The new house structure has provided an opportunity for teaching assistants and cover supervisors to take on leadership responsibilities. This strategy helps middle leaders to have a much clearer focus on raising standards.

**Recommendation 6 - further improve the quality and impact of special educational needs provision by ensuring that pupils' targets are suitably clearly defined and that pupils are fully involved in the review process**

The school has made good progress in addressing this recommendation. The well-coordinated special educational needs provision involves pupils fully in setting clear targets for their individual education plans. Classroom teachers have good access to these plans, which include helpful strategies to address the identified needs.

Representatives from each subject regularly attend a special educational needs focus group to discuss and exchange good practice.

However, only a minority of teachers make effective use of individual education plans. In these lessons, teachers adapt resources skilfully to meet the needs of identified groups of pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

**Recommendation 7 – ensure that self-evaluation processes are effective in identifying all shortcomings so that resources can be used more strategically to improve teaching and to raise standards.**

The school has made very good progress with this recommendation. A robust self-evaluation cycle involves all staff. The process is thorough and self-critical, and identifies strengths and areas for improvement. These procedures are now starting to result in improvements in standards and teaching.

Whole-school and departmental self-evaluation reports feed into detailed improvement plans which are beginning to address many of the identified weaknesses. Improvement plans are detailed and provide a clear basis for action.

All staff are involved in a comprehensive lesson observation programme and receive detailed written feedback summarising good features and areas for improvement. Many teachers observe lessons within and outside their own subjects. The school's 'aspire' programme also enables teachers to share good practice and pair up with more experienced members of staff. This has contributed to an improvement in the quality of teaching.

Curriculum leaders receive detailed written feedback following reviews of pupils' work. The leadership team support them effectively to ensure a more consistent approach towards self-evaluation and improvement planning.

### **Recommendation 8: raise standards in bilingualism by addressing shortcomings in the teaching of Welsh and by developing further the use of incidental Welsh across the curriculum and around the school**

Since the Section 28 inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing this recommendation. There has been an improvement in the organisation and teaching of Welsh. Key stage 3 pupils now have an increasingly positive attitude towards Welsh lessons. They are making good progress in developing their understanding and skills. However, standards at the end of the key stage remain below that of similar schools.

Standards at key stage 4 have been too variable, although they have improved by five percentage points since the last inspection. The school does not enter pupils for the full-course GCSE examination and standards remain unsatisfactory.

The school has made sound progress in improving attitudes and increasing the use of incidental Welsh. The new website, available in Welsh and Polish, promotes the school's Catholic Welsh ethos effectively.

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve, the school should:

- increase pupils' performance at key stage 3 and key stage 4;
- raise standards in Welsh and develop further the use of incidental Welsh;
- continue to focus on the most effective strategies to increase levels of attendance;
- improve the quality of teaching in the minority of lessons with important shortcomings; and
- improve the consistency and effectiveness of marking and assessment.