

RE-INSPECTION
OF
ST FRANCIS VA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
PRIORY ROAD, MILFORD HAVEN
SA 73 2EE
SCHOOL NUMBER: 6683314

DATE OF INSPECTION: 5 AND 6 APRIL 2011

St Francis VA Catholic Primary School was inspected in June 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 September 2010 focusing on the key issues identified in the section 28 inspection. Estyn undertook a further follow-up inspection in April 2011 focusing on the key issues identified in the September 2010 inspection

Outcome of the re-inspection

St Francis VA Catholic Primary School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection in June 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 responded positively to the inspection of June 2009 and the re-inspection of September 2010. All staff have worked extremely hard to bring about the necessary improvements. There is a shared belief and optimism amongst staff and governors that the school is improving and will continue to do so.

The school is making progress in:

- developing leadership systems within the school to ensure that strategic planning is sustainable.

In March 2011, the acting headteacher became the headteacher of the school. This appointment ensures that there is consistency in the senior leadership of the school and provides a solid platform for the school's continuing improvement. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by staff and governors. She has worked tirelessly to improve systems to support effective learning and teaching, improved resources in

areas such as information and communication technology (ICT) and enhanced the learning environment. These initiatives have impacted positively upon pupil's wellbeing and standards. Improvements in computer hardware, for example, have improved pupils' standards in ICT. Governors are very supportive of the school and committed to ensuring that it improves. They are well informed about the school's progress in meeting planned actions but are less secure in their knowledge of pupils' progress.

- improving standards in all subjects and pupils' bilingual competence.

The school has made good progress in addressing shortcomings in pupils' skills in ICT. Most pupils use ICT programmes to support their learning effectively, for example, pupils in the foundation phase and year 2 create simple graphs, and most pupils in key stage 2 search the internet skilfully to retrieve relevant research information. Most pupils in key stage 2 use a variety of software applications well to develop their ideas and present their work.

Pupils' bilingual skills are continuing to improve. Most pupils in the Foundation Phase and year 2 confidently use a range of simple words and phrases in Welsh. They respond well to instructions and join in Welsh songs with enthusiasm. Older pupils are gaining confidence in using Welsh to ask questions about where they live and what they like doing. Pupils' skills in reading and writing in Welsh are developing appropriately. At end of their time in school, pupils confidently write short, interesting accounts of their visit to Urdd Centre at Llangrannog.

Most pupils use their creative, problem solving and numeracy skills well in a limited context. Too few opportunities exist, however, for pupils to enhance and strengthen these skills.

- improving the consistency and effectiveness of assessment procedures so that pupils know what they need to do to improve, and to inform teaching.

Assessment processes are regular and consistent throughout the school and are beginning to impact positively on pupils' progress. For example, standardised test data is analysed to identify pupils requiring short-term literacy support. These pupils make good progress in their reading and spelling skills. Throughout the school, teachers are developing good processes for setting improvement targets with pupils. However, not all pupils are sure what they must do to achieve these targets. Teachers are more aware of pupils in their class of above average academic ability. All teachers plan conscientiously for these pupils but activities are not always sufficiently challenging or cater for the needs of a broad range of abilities, such as pupils with creative talents or good leadership skills.

- continuing to develop planning, taking full account of the 2008 National Curriculum orders, and to improve mapping and tracking of pupils' skills across the curriculum.

The school has made sound progress in developing schemes of work that take good account of the 2008 National Curriculum orders. Teachers work together productively to develop thematic schemes of work that pay close attention to the development of pupils' key skills. The school has developed good systems to map the coverage of skills across curriculum planning and to track the progression and development of pupils' key skills, but teachers do not always plan carefully enough to develop pupils' thinking skills. The focus on pupils' literacy skills is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing. However, schemes of work are at an early stage of development and the school has yet to develop processes to ensure that planning covers the range and skills for all subjects and areas of learning in the most appropriate way.

- ensuring that staff has the necessary professional development training to secure school improvement in planning and teaching.

Training for individual members of staff has a positive impact upon school development. For example, support staff confidently use incidental Welsh in classes as a result of their training. In key stage 2, pupils' narrative writing in year 6 has improved as a result of the class teacher attending several training sessions on story writing. The attendance of another member of staff at basic skills training has improved the school's use of assessment data. Whole school training, however, is not linked closely enough to key development priorities such as planning, assessment and the skills curriculum. This means that not all staff have the knowledge and understanding to plan pupils' progress as effectively as they should.

- making better use of the analysis of performance data to improve teaching and learning

Staff are making better use of standardised test data to inform learning and teaching strategies. Non-verbal reasoning test information, for instance, is plotted alongside pupils' standardised reading scores to identify underachievers in order to provide support. Individual teachers are making good use of assessment information to work with individual pupils where there are inconsistencies in a pupil's assessment profile. The headteacher effectively analysed end of key stage data for 2010 and identified pupils' writing as an area for improvement. Work has already begun to address this.

- working with the local authority to improve safety of the school site.

The safety of the site has been improved through the installation of bollards to prevent vehicular access to the front of the school. The main school gate is also closed during the school day.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- continue to improve pupils' thinking and numeracy skills;
- ensure whole school training focuses clearly on improving the coherency and effectiveness of curriculum planning and assessment;
- strengthen whole- school evaluation by ensuring that success is measured in outcomes for pupils; and
- further develop the role of governors in supporting and monitoring school improvement.