



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 Mary's C in W Voluntary Aided School
Intermediate Road
Brynmawr
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 4SF**

Date of inspection: June 2013

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 Mary's Church in Wales Primary School is in Brynmawr in Blaenau Gwent. It serves the local area, which includes the Parish of St Mary's. Pupils generally come from homes which are neither socially nor economically advantaged nor disadvantaged. There are 240 full-time equivalent pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11. This includes the 39 pupils who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The school numbers have been stable for some time.

The school has identified 23% of pupils with some degree of additional learning needs, including a very few who have statements of special educational needs. These figures are close to the average for Wales (22%). Approximately 15% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average (21%). This figure is lower than the 2011 total of 19%. No pupil was excluded in the previous school year. Nearly all pupils come from white, British backgrounds. No pupil has Welsh as the language of the home and no pupil has support in English as an additional language. No pupil is looked after by the local authority.

The school was last inspected in the summer term 2007.

The previous longstanding headteacher resigned at the end of the autumn term 2012. The current headteacher was appointed with effect from April 2013. In the interim period the deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School in 2012-2013 is £3,767. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Blaenau Gwent is £5,681 and the minimum is £3,285. St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School is 22nd out of 27 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent in terms of its school budget.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School is adequate because:

- many pupils make good progress, often from below expected starting points;
- standards in classes at the end of key stage 2 in literacy and Welsh are good;
- nearly all pupils behave well;
- pupils have good opportunities to learn about ecological issues and global citizenship;
- teaching is good across the school;
- the school has a very positive and supportive ethos; and
- staff work well together as a team.

However:

- standards in the Foundation Phase are too low;
- overtime, pupils' performance in the end of key stage 2 assessments at both the expected level (level 4) and higher level (level 5) does not compare well to that in other similar schools;
- the curriculum in the Foundation Phase is not focused well enough on developing pupils' language, mathematical and personal skills; and
- the school's improvement systems are very new and have yet to impact fully on raising pupils' standards.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement at St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School are good because:

- the recently appointed headteacher provides a very purposeful lead and has high expectations of all;
- there are well-constructed initiatives to raise standards, which are beginning to have an impact;
- staff share a strong commitment for further improvement;
- the governing body and staff work closely together to improve the school;
- the new school self-evaluation process is very thorough, honest and accurate; and
- school self-evaluation is now closely linked to the school improvement processes, which are used regularly and effectively.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in the Foundation Phase
- R2 Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher levels at the end of key stage 2
- R3 Ensure that all learning experiences give pupils opportunities to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills to an appropriate level
- R4 Ensure that pupils' short and long-term progress is tracked effectively
- R5 Fully involve all stakeholders in self-evaluation activities

What happens next?

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.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Many pupils by the age of 11 make good progress, often from below expected starting points.

In all classes, many pupils listen well and speak clearly, conveying their thoughts and feelings confidently. In the Foundation Phase, a majority of pupils read a wide range of different texts accurately and talk enthusiastically about what they have read. However, a significant minority do not confidently use a range of appropriate strategies to help them read unfamiliar words. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read confidently and accurately. More able pupils read fluently and expressively.

The majority of older pupils are competent writers and write well in a variety of forms and for different purposes, for example in science and in history. They spell and punctuate their work correctly. In the Foundation Phase, only a few more able pupils write confidently or have good letter formation.

The standards of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are adequate overall. In the Foundation Phase, many are unsure of how to use the skills they are learning in language and mathematical development in other areas of learning. However, many older pupils, in key stage 2, use and apply their skills well across the curriculum.

Standards in Welsh are generally good and pupils make good progress, especially in key stage 2. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils confidently engage in dialogue with each other and adults. Pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh develop well throughout the school.

In the end of Foundation Phase assessments of seven-year-olds in 2012, results were well below the family of schools and national averages. This in part reflects the large proportion of boys who had some degree of additional learning needs. Pupils' performance in all three assessed areas of learning placed the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance at the expected level in 2012 in English was close to the family and national averages. In mathematics and science, the results were above these averages. At the higher level, results in English were better than the family, local and national averages. In mathematics and science, results were below these averages. In science, they were low. Over time, there has been a positive trend of improvement at the end of key stage 2 assessments but from a very low base. The school's performance at the expected and higher levels generally placed it in the lower 50% when compared to other similar schools.

The difference in attainment of boys compared to girls was particularly marked in the 2012 end of Foundation Phase assessments. In the end of key stage 2 assessments, the difference in the attainment of boys and girls generally follows national trends. By the end of key stage 2, the progress of pupils with free school meals compared to those not receiving free school meals is similar to that in other schools in the family and nationally. Those with additional learning needs nearly always make at least the progress reasonably expected of them.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils have good levels of wellbeing. They have a sound understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They feel safe and happy in school and many take part enthusiastically in a range of sporting clubs.

Nearly all pupils behave well and know what is expected of them. They are courteous and considerate to others and act with maturity. Pupils are enthusiastic and well-motivated. They engage well in lessons and listen attentively. They have a good knowledge of what they need to do to improve their learning. The oldest pupils have well-established work habits and the skills necessary to be successful in the future. They make worthwhile suggestions about what they want to learn, for example when discussing their work in history and geography.

The school council is developing appropriately as a forum for pupils to influence school life. Pupils were involved, for example, in interviewing the recently appointed headteacher.

Attendance levels have improved steadily over the past three years. At nearly 94%, attendance is now in line with the average for similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The school's curriculum provides a suitable range of interesting and relevant learning experiences that meet the needs of many pupils. However, overall the school's provision for developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is adequate. In the Foundation Phase, planning to consistently develop and apply pupils' skills is in its early stages.

There is a good range of out of school activities for pupils in key stage 2, including sporting, dancing and gardening clubs. These extra-curricular activities promote pupils' wellbeing and achievement successfully. Pupils visit many places of interest, such as St. Fagan's Museum, Dan yr Ogof caves and Llancaiach Fawr, to support their studies.

Provision for pupils' Welsh language development is good. Adults throughout the school model the use of the language effectively. Pupils have opportunities to study Welsh artists and poets and a range of interesting people from history such as Betsy

Cadwalader and Richard Trevithick. A weekly Welsh language assembly promotes the language and culture of Wales well.

The school promotes very good awareness of sustainable development for all pupils through the curriculum and many related extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils have a very secure knowledge of the reasons for acting sustainably. Through creating their own landfill project in school, they are aware of the purpose behind their recycling activities. Pupils' understanding of their role in the wider world is developing well through the study of other cultures.

Teaching: Good

In most lessons, teachers prepare thoroughly and have clear learning objectives that they share with their pupils. They carefully review the progress pupils make. Many have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and use positive praise well to encourage pupils to try hard. Teaching assistants support individuals and groups of pupils effectively.

In the best lessons, teachers ensure that pupils learn through a wide range of practical activities. They organise these activities carefully so that all pupils make choices for themselves and have opportunities to co-operate with each other. In these lessons, teachers match work carefully to the different abilities within the class.

A few lessons have shortcomings. In these lessons, pupils sit and listen for too long. As a result, they become bored and the pace of their learning is too slow. A few teachers do not ensure that all pupils are listening carefully or following the instructions they receive.

The school has thorough procedures to assess pupils' work accurately. Pupils' written work is marked regularly. Comments are constructive and indicate the ways forward. Teachers make effective use of the assessments to identify and provide individual support. However, the current system does not provide enough readily available evidence of the long-term progress pupils make from the time they begin school.

Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own progress. All pupils have personal targets, set by their teachers. However, pupils have limited involvement in setting their own improvement targets. The detailed annual reports give parents and carers a clear picture of what their child can do.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a safe and caring community where pupils' personal and spiritual development is given high priority. Through its values programme the school provides many good opportunities for pupils to reflect on moral and personal issues and to develop positive attitudes about themselves and others. The school has good arrangements for the promotion of pupils' health and wellbeing. There is effective provision in place to encourage pupils to make healthier choices at lunchtime, but this is not effective at break times, when pupils bring in unhealthy snacks.

The school has good links with specialist external agencies to access support and guidance for more vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs.

Pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support. Staff evaluate pupils' progress and update individual education plans regularly. Parents and carers are included effectively in this process. Teaching assistants work well to provide worthwhile learning experiences for pupils with additional learning needs and for those who need short term support to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. The early identification of pupils in need of additional support and the timely implementation of the literacy and numeracy support programmes ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve the targets set. The school has a successful programme to support vulnerable pupils through their transition from primary to secondary school.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a positive and inclusive ethos. It ensures that pupils have equal access to all aspects of school life. Leaders treat pupils and staff fairly and ensure that they are free from harassment or discrimination. Policies and procedures for dealing with issues of equality or any form of discrimination follow detailed agreed guidelines. The school celebrates pupils' progress and achievement well, both in class and during collective worship.

The school's accommodation is of a good standard and the building is clean and well maintained. Classrooms and communal areas are colourful and welcoming. Staff promote learning effectively through purposeful displays and through using the good supply of learning resources. The school maintains the recently renovated toilet areas well. Over time, the school has developed its outdoor environment extensively to encourage pupils to learn through carrying out environmental investigations and experiments. The woodland, pond and gardening areas enable all pupils to grow vegetables and explore the wildlife within the school grounds.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, which he has shared successfully with all staff and governors. The senior management team work closely and co-operatively together. They have a common commitment to continuous improvement and to evaluating rigorously the success of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make. All staff have well-defined roles and responsibilities and they discharge them conscientiously and effectively.

There are good systems now in place to organise the performance management of teachers. However, these have yet to have their full effect. Support staff are currently being involved for the first time in the process.

The governing body has a clear sense of purpose and is well informed. The chair is a very regular visitor to the school and works closely with the headteacher and senior staff. Governors now review rigorously the progress the school is making to reach its objectives on a monthly basis. Individual governors have effective links with the teaching staff as part of this process, for example when reviewing the school's performance data. Governors hold the school properly to account and have a good understanding of its long-term priorities and the school's financial needs.

The school pays close attention to local and national priorities. It is now focusing well on improving pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy and introducing consistent assessment for learning strategies. The school has addressed the national priority of encouraging pupils to learn about sustainable development and ecological issues very successfully.

Improving quality: Adequate

The headteacher has led a recent yet rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation report provides a clear and accurate evaluation of the school's performance, its strengths and areas for improvement.

There is now a very strong link between the self-evaluation process and planning for improvement. The new school improvement plan is very detailed and clearly describes priorities for action. It effectively costs each activity, names the individuals responsible for actions and lists success criteria. However, it is very new and it is too soon for the actions to have secured improvements for pupils.

Clear management structures and regular meetings ensure that staff identify with and contribute constructively to the school's priorities for development. All governors and staff have been fully engaged in reviewing the findings. However, there have been limited opportunities for all stakeholders to be fully engaged in the whole process.

Until recently there has been limited progress in addressing two of the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Networks of professional practice are developing well both in school and through collaboration with other schools. These networks have a positive influence on planning, moderating assessments and developing teaching strategies and principles. The recent joint work to develop an assessment package, and to raise standards in boys' writing by using social media, contributes to sharing best practices.

Partnership working: Good

The school's partnerships with parents and the community are good. Nearly all parents are happy with the school's provision and feel well informed about activities. The parent teacher association is working closely with the school council to fund new playground resources. Currently there are new initiatives to encourage parents to play a greater part in school life. The school has good links with the local authority and other support agencies. It has valuable working relationships with local community groups. The school also works closely with and a number of

environmental agencies, for example in developing pupils' understanding of the life cycle of a salmon.

There is worthwhile co-operation with other primary schools in the local area to share ideas and to agree the standards of pupils' work. The school is beginning to strengthen its professional relationships within its family of schools. There are good arrangements for parents and their children when they start school in the nursery and when they move on to key stage 2. Staff collaborate well with teachers from the local secondary school prior to transfer to Year 7. There is good exchange of information about pupils with additional learning needs between the primary and secondary schools.

Resource management: Adequate

The school manages its financial resources carefully and has good systems to plan and monitor spending closely. The governing body manages the budget well and ensures that spending decisions meet the needs and priorities identified in the school improvement plan.

The school has a good supply of resources to support the curriculum, particularly in the provision for outdoor activities. The school has enough suitably qualified, trained teachers and a generous number of teaching assistants who work well together. Leaders deploy staff effectively to make the best use of their individual expertise.

The school has good arrangements for staff development and for providing preparation planning and assessment time for teachers. All staff have appropriate job descriptions.

By the end of key stage 2, many pupils make at least expected progress. However, standards in the Foundation Phase are too low and, overtime, pupils' performance in the end of key stage 2 assessments at both the expected and higher levels does not compare well to that in other similar schools. As a result, the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The baseline assessment of pupils on entry to the nursery shows that many have below the expected levels of basic skills and maturity for their age.

In 2012, the proportion of pupils in the Foundation Phase who attained the expected outcome (outcome 5) in language, mathematical and personal development was well below the average for the family of schools. The proportion of pupils who attained above the expected outcome (outcome 6) was close to the family in language, literacy and communication skills but well below in mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Boys performed well below girls in all assessed areas.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school was in the lowest 25% for the Foundation Phase indicator and all three assessed areas of learning.

In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level or above in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) was above the family and national averages. In English, the results were above these averages at level 4 and at the higher level. In mathematics and science, the results were similar to the expected level but below these averages at the higher level.

The long-term trend from a low very base has been positive in each of these subjects and when these subjects are combined. However, standards dipped in English and science in the last three years. Girls performed better than boys in a proportion that broadly matched the national differences.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance at level 4 in the core subject indicator and in mathematics has placed it consistently in the lower 50%. In science, results have varied more. In English, results have placed the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools in four of the last five years. In the other year, it was in the higher 50%. In science, the school has been in the higher 50% in two of the last three years. The gap between the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals and other pupils at the end of key stage 2 has varied over the last three years. In 2012, it was very close to the family and national averages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Parents and carers

Thirteen parents or carers completed the questionnaire. All parents or carers strongly agreed that:

- they are generally satisfied with the school and it is well run;
- their child likes school and is safe;
- their child is making good progress;
- pupils behave well;
- teaching is good;
- their child is expected to work hard and do his or her best;
- homework builds well on what their child learns in school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints; and
- their child is well prepared to move on to the next school.

A minority felt that:

- there is a good range of activities including trips and visits.

A very few parents felt that:

- their child was not helped to settle well when they started school;
- their child does not receive appropriate additional support in relation to their individual needs; and
- the school does not help their child become mature and take on responsibilities.

The views of these parents and carers are generally in line with those from all primary schools inspected in Wales.

Pupils

One hundred and nine pupils in key stage 2 completed the pupil questionnaire. Nearly all pupils said that:

- they feel safe in school and they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- the school teaches them how to be healthy and there are lots of chances for regular exercise;
- the teachers and other adults help them to learn and to make progress;
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and

- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Most pupils thought that:

- they are doing well at school; and
- the school deals well with bullying.

Many pupils said that:

- other pupils behave well in the class so that they can get their work done; and
- nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

The views of pupils are generally in line with the responses from all primary schools in Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Terry Williams	Team Inspector
Deirdre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Andrew Gilbert	Peer Inspector
Darren Jones	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language;
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language;
- mathematics; and
- science.

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.