



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 R.C. Primary School
Ffordd Llewelyn
Flint,
Flintshire
CH6 5JZ**

Date of inspection: July 2012

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is in Flint next to St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School. The present school site was opened in 1962.

The school caters for 344 pupils at present between the ages of three and 11, taught by 12 full-time and four part-time teachers. Pupils are admitted into the Nursery class in the September following their third birthday and to the Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Including the nursery class, there are 12 classes. Five of these classes have mixed age groups. The school also employs 29 part-time support staff.

The majority of pupils are white British; 12% are of eastern European origin and 6% are from mixed or other minority ethnic backgrounds. About 21% of pupils come from homes in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The majority of children enter the school with less than average baseline scores, many with no English.

Fifteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This shows a significant increase over the past three years. Eighteen per cent of pupils are on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs.

The current headteacher has been in post since September 2008. There has been a significant number of staff changes since that time.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Mary's R.C. Primary School in 2011-2012 is £2,830. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Flintshire is £10,075 and the minimum is £2,616. St Mary's R.C. Primary School is 69th out of the 76 primary schools in Flintshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

There are good features to the school's current performance because:

- pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who acquire English as an additional language, make good progress;
- almost all pupils achieve well in their oral communication skills and most pupils write well and accurately;
- the majority of pupils by the end of key stage 2 have achieved a level of reading which is at, or above, the appropriate level for their age;
- the quality of teaching is good overall; and
- teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of most pupils.

However:

- the school consistently performs below the family and Wales averages in teacher assessments at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2;
- at the end of both key stages, the school performs consistently within the lowest 50% and 25% compared to similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals; and
- only a minority of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase read at a level appropriate to their age.

Prospects for improvement

There are good features in the school's prospects for improvement because:

- the headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school;
- the senior management team provides good leadership and support for staff; and
- school leaders analyse performance data rigorously and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

However:

- self-evaluation is insufficiently wide-ranging; and
- the strategic improvement plan is imprecise and contains few measurable targets for improvement.

Recommendations

To improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards of reading in the Foundation Phase;
- R2 improve the performance of pupils in teacher assessments at the end of both key stages;
- R3 secure consistency in teaching and in approaches to assessment for learning;
- R4 ensure that the process of self-evaluation is based securely on first hand evidence from a range of sources, including classroom observations, and leads to improvement planning that is clearly focused on pupil outcomes; and
- R5 develop the strategic role of governors, and ensure that they comply with all statutory requirements.

What happens next?

The school will prepare an action plan detailing how it is going to address these recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

In general, pupils' work in books and during lessons shows they are making appropriate progress during their time in school. They develop well as independent learners in line with age and ability as they move through the school.

Almost all pupils make good progress in their oral communication skills. They speak clearly and confidently with other pupils and with adults in a range of formal and informal situations. They give effective extended answers and responses during lessons, using a good range of general and subject-specific vocabulary.

Progress in reading is generally sound and most pupils read a good range of appropriate material confidently. They develop a positive attitude to reading and read both for pleasure and to help them look for information. Analysis of reading test results shows that only a minority of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase read at a level appropriate to their age. In contrast, in key stage 2, the majority of pupils have achieved a level of reading which is at, or above, the appropriate level for their age.

Most pupils write well and accurately and many pupils produce work of a high standard by the end of key stage 2, including extended pieces of writing across the curriculum.

Most pupils speak, read and write Welsh at an appropriate level within the structured context of their Welsh lessons, during registration and collective worship. However, very few pupils have the confidence to use their Welsh skills in informal contexts around the school.

Pupils with additional learning needs including those with English as an additional language, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, make good progress in their learning.

The majority of children enter the school with less than average baseline scores. Results of teacher assessment in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 show that performance is inconsistent over the three years up to 2011. The school consistently performs below the family and Wales averages in these core subjects. Compared with similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school has regularly been in the lowest 50% or 25% in all subject areas and in the core subject indicator (English, mathematics and science taken together).

Performance at a higher standard than expected (level 3 or above at key stage 1 and level 5 or above at key stage 2) are lower than the family and Wales averages, and consistently in the lowest 25% of that for similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals do not generally achieve on a par with other pupils.

There is no generally recurring pattern of significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Provisional teacher assessment results for the end of key stage 2 in 2012 show a slight improvement on 2011 results, but boys' performance is significantly lower than that of girls, particularly at level 5 or above.

Wellbeing: Good

As they move through the school, all pupils develop a secure understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Behaviour is almost always good. All pupils show courtesy and respect to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils feel safe in school and say that instances of poor behaviour are rare. Where such instances do arise, pupils know whom to approach for support.

All pupils clearly enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning. They focus closely on tasks and work well with others. All pupils develop the skills to improve their own learning and their ability to solve problems. At the start of each topic, many pupils make a valuable contribution towards what they want to learn.

For the past three years, the rate of attendance at around 92% has been in the lowest 25% when compared to that of similar schools. Attendance rates for the current year have risen to above 94% as a result of action taken by the school. This currently exceeds the challenging target for improvement of attendance for the current year. Nearly all pupils arrive at school punctually.

As pupils move through the school they develop good social and life skills. Pupils are well represented by their school council. Members of the school council are actively involved in making decisions about what happens in the school. For example, the setting up of a table with a Welsh theme during lunchtime to encourage pupils to speak Welsh was a school council idea.

Pupils are proud of their school and work well with others within the school as a community. All pupils take increasing responsibility as they move through the school. Older pupils take on roles of responsibility, which they carry out conscientiously. Their work as reading buddies for the younger pupils is particularly effective.

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

The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that meet the needs of most pupils. Learning experiences planned in the Foundation Phase provide a good balance of independent and adult-led activities, both indoors and out. The school covers the curriculum requirements for key stage 2 effectively.

Teachers plan well together to ensure consistency of provision across each year group and in mixed age classes. The curriculum develops pupils' knowledge,

understanding and skills systematically as they move through the school. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas within the planning of topics.

The use of special events, such as a Fairtrade Fortnight, has a very positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum. There is an extremely wide variety of extra-curricular clubs. These enhance pupils' learning experiences considerably.

Withdrawal groups and effective individual learning programmes have a positive impact on pupils who need additional support.

Planning for the development of pupils' skills in communication, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum is systematic and thorough. The provision for Welsh language and the Welsh dimension enables pupils to make good progress.

The school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to learn about global citizenship, but is less effective in promoting sustainable development. An eco-council has recently been established.

Teaching: Good

All teachers have positive working relationships with pupils and this fosters a good working environment. Most make effective use of a range of teaching strategies, which ensure that most pupils are motivated and engaged. In a very few lessons, the strategies are not used to full effect.

Teachers plan well to meet the needs and interests of most pupils. Most lessons have appropriate learning objectives. However, these are not always expressed in a sufficiently clear manner for pupils to understand. Teachers use a range of good resources well to enhance learning.

Classroom assistants make a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and usually comment positively on pupils' achievements. In most classes, where marking is most effective, comments include constructive guidance on how to improve.

Strategies for assessment for learning are used in many classes, including self-assessment and peer marking. In the few classes where this is good, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, these strategies are not consistent and are not embedded throughout the school.

The school has adopted a new system that is helping to track pupils' progress through the school effectively. The school's active participation in the local arrangements for standardisation and moderation in the core subjects supports the accuracy of teacher assessment well.

Reports to parents are clear and informative. Most parents feel that they receive good information on their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The level of care, support and guidance offered to pupils is very effective and results in nearly all pupils enjoying school and wanting to learn. The school promotes the benefits of healthy living effectively, including the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. The school has effective arrangements with an extensive and comprehensive range of external agencies and support services. Induction arrangements for new pupils are tailored well to meet the needs of pupils and there is good support for pupils transferring to the neighbouring high school.

Pupils are provided with a range of good opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally and are encouraged to develop a sense of curiosity and to share their viewpoint and own experiences. The school's personal and social education programme contributes very positively to the health and wellbeing of pupils.

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

The school makes good provision for pupils with additional needs. Effective procedures are in place for the early identification of individual needs and clearly targeted support for groups of vulnerable pupils has resulted in significant improvement in terms of behaviour, confidence and achievement.

The school makes effective provision for pupils whose first language is not English. Classroom support for these pupils is good. Class teachers are sensitive to their needs and work hard to ensure that these children understand what is happening and what they need to be doing.

Staff devise individual education plans that clearly target pupils who require extra support and intervention programmes, including support from key agencies. These are regularly reviewed and updated.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive Christian community where pupils learn in a secure, happy and caring environment. There is a strong emphasis on equality and the school recognises and celebrates diversity positively, through the curriculum and out-of-school activities.

Apart from the limited provision of computing equipment, the availability of good quality teaching and learning resources fully meets the needs of pupils and staff. Teachers use these resources effectively to deliver all aspects of the curriculum.

The classroom and communal accommodation is of good quality and well maintained and provides a stimulating learning environment. Colourful and interesting classroom displays celebrate pupils' achievements and enhance their learning.

The school, with the co-operation and support of community organisations, has worked effectively to develop the outside areas. This has improved provision and has impacted positively on pupils' wellbeing and standards.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Good

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, leads an experienced and committed senior leadership team. Together they promote an ethos in which all staff collaborate in furthering the school's aims and values. They have high expectations of all staff and each other, and support colleagues through an appropriate programme of performance management, although lesson observations are limited.

Senior leaders make detailed analyses of information about pupil performance, which they use well to set targets for themselves and others. They know how well groups of pupils compare with each other and with those in similar schools. Curriculum leaders are proactive in their roles and provide good support for their colleagues.

Governors are supportive and carry out their duties diligently. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and know where improvement is needed, but they do not provide enough challenge to help the school to improve. At present, they do not comply fully with a small number of statutory requirements.

The school has responded well to national priorities, such as the implementation of the Foundation Phase and the promotion of the Welsh language.

Improving quality: Adequate

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders analyse and evaluate attainment data thoroughly and use the information to compile an annual strategic improvement plan. At present, there is no programme to monitor the quality of teaching and assessment in each class. Consequently, leaders and managers are unable to ensure that good practice is consistent across the school. Self-evaluation is insufficiently wide-ranging and does not routinely include the views of pupils, parents and other stakeholders.

The strategic improvement plan is based on evaluation of data and takes account of the detailed assessments of standards in subjects carried out by all staff. The plan has a reasonable number of priorities, which are sub-divided into smaller tasks. However, the document is imprecise and contains few measurable targets for improvement. This restricts the plan's effectiveness as a tool for bringing about school improvement.

There is an arrangement with other schools within the diocese that provides learning opportunities for more able and talented pupils. The school recently established a learning community to improve spelling. There is evidence that standards in literacy are beginning to improve as a result.

Partnership working: Good

The school has very effective links with a wide range of partners, including Saint Richard Gwyn High School. These partnerships make a strong contribution to improving learning resources and outcomes for pupils, particularly in developing their skills across the curriculum.

Effective partnerships with the local authority and Catholic consortium help improve the quality of assessment and moderation. The quality of transition plans with the secondary school is good and also involves the Diocese and other local schools. This helps to prepare ;pupils well for the next stage in their education.

The network of partnerships between St Mary's and other local schools has provided pupils with particularly valuable first-hand experiences of a skills-enriched curriculum.

Resource management: Adequate

There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced staff to teach the full range of subjects and areas of learning. Classroom assistants are efficiently deployed and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and wellbeing. There are plentiful resources of good quality throughout the school and they are used well.

The headteacher and governing body carefully monitor spending decisions. These are aligned with school improvement priorities. The level of reserves within the budget is within recommended limits.

In view of the standards attained by the majority of pupils, and the absence of an improving trend, the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Key stage 1

During the three years leading up to 2011, the school's results in teacher assessments in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator (the three subjects taken together) have been inconsistent, and lower than the average results for the family of schools and Wales. Over the same period, when compared to similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school has consistently been in the lowest 50% or 25%. Though girls generally outperform boys, there is no recurring pattern of significant difference, and the gap between boys' and girls' performance is often smaller than the average gaps in the family and Wales.

Performance at the higher level (level 3 or above) is also consistently below family and Wales averages, and is in the lowest 50% or 25% when compared with that of similar schools.

Key stage 2

The pattern for key stage 2 assessments is similar. Results are inconsistent, and consistently below the average for both family of schools and Wales. When compared with similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school has consistently been in the lowest 25%. The performance of boys is generally lower than that of girls, but there is no recurring pattern of significant difference over the three years.

The percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels (level 5 or above) is consistently lower than family and Wales averages, and falls regularly into the lowest 25% of performance levels of similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Provisional results for 2012 teacher assessments show a small increase on 2011 results. There is an increased difference between the performance of boys and girls, particularly at the higher level (level 5 and above), with girls outperforming boys by a significant margin.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Pupil questionnaire

One hundred pupils responded to the questionnaire. Responses are generally very positive, with a higher proportion of pupils than nationally who agree with the questionnaire statements. All pupils state that the teachers at the school help them make progress, and other very strong responses are that pupils feel safe at school and that the school teaches them how to keep healthy.

Twelve per cent of pupils feel that the school does not deal well with any bullying, and 33% disagree that other children behave well and allow them to get on with their work. A lower percentage of 23% disagree that nearly all pupils behave well at school. The level of support for these three questions is significantly lower than the national average across all inspections in primary schools.

Parent questionnaire

Ninety-seven parents responded to the questionnaire. In general, the responses are very positive and the overall picture is very similar to the picture for inspections in primary schools across Wales. Responses relating to their children's progress and wellbeing, and the work of the teachers are especially strong, with most parents responding positively to the statements. Many parents feel that the school treats their children with respect, and that they receive appropriate additional support when required.

Twenty-six per cent of parents say that they do not understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints. This is the only response that is significantly lower than the average response of parents in other primary school inspections across Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Terwyn Tomas	Reporting Inspector
Christopher Dolby	Team Inspector
Mary Dyas	Team Inspector
James Jones	Lay Inspector
Linda Williams	Peer Inspector
Rachel Molyneux	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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FPYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.