



*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

**Report following monitoring  
Level of follow-up: significant improvement**

**St Mary's R.C. Primary School  
Bulwark Road  
Chepstow  
Monmouthshire  
NP16 5JE**

**Date of visit: January 2015**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Gwenda Easton	Reporting Inspector
Susan Davies	Team Inspector

## **Outcome of monitoring visit**

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in October 2013.

As a result, 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**

### **Recommendation 1: Improve the standards achieved by more able pupils**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have an effective system to identify pupils who are more able. In the Foundation Phase, teachers' planning ensures that pupils' learning develops appropriately on previous knowledge. By the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils who are more able use place value in numbers to 1,000 confidently, develop mental strategies to add and subtract numbers of two and three digits, and use standard units of length and time. Most pupils apply their mathematical skills successfully during challenging activities. Pupils' literacy skills in the Foundation Phase are also of a high standard, with many of the more able pupils using a good variety of powerful adjectives to improve the quality of their work. Most pupils use capital letters, full stops, exclamation marks and commas with confidence and are beginning to understand the concept of speech marks. Most pupils produce extended pieces of writing that is often organised, imaginative and clear and includes a variety of genre, for example diaries, recounts, informal letters, descriptive writing and explanation.

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils who are more able can write confidently using an extended range of vocabulary. They have opportunities to write for different purposes and in a range of forms. For example, most pupils who are more able can confidently write reports, informal letters, diaries, imaginative writing, film reviews and recounts. Teachers plan for progression in mathematics effectively so that the more able pupils have increasingly challenging tasks to match their learning needs. As a result, these pupils are producing work at a higher than expected level. A weekly visit by a mathematics teacher from a local high school provides further challenge and extension work for the few pupils that are more able in mathematics.

In key stage 2, performance at the higher than expected level (level 5) in both English and mathematics has improved, moving the school from the bottom 25% of similar schools in 2013 to the higher 50% in 2014.

In the Foundation Phase, performance at the higher than expected outcome 6 in literacy has risen from 27% in 2013 to 43% in 2014, and in mathematical development it has risen from 47% in 2013 to 53% in 2014. Performance in mathematical development continues to place the school in the top 25% of similar schools while performance for language, literacy and communication places it in the lower 50%. The overall progress, that is evident in pupils' books, is yet to be seen in the end of key stage results.

## **Recommendation 2: Improve pupils' attendance**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school's arrangements for promoting and supporting pupil attendance are comprehensive. Nearly all pupils respond well to the school's systems of rewarding high levels of attendance, such as certificates for individuals and weekly awards for classes with the best attendance. The strong partnership with the educational welfare officer supports families of pupils with low attendance and those who are persistently late.

Over the last term, newly introduced procedures have significantly reduced the numbers of pupils with attendance of 90% or less and have improved punctuality considerably. The school publishes attendance figures in their weekly newsletter, and staff and governors regularly discuss attendance at their meetings to analyse progress appropriately towards the whole school target. The school follows the local authority attendance policy, including that holiday absences are no longer authorised unless in exceptional circumstances. This has improved parents' awareness of the importance of regular attendance. The school responds robustly to any unexplained absence and has suitable arrangements for responding to attendance issues.

Attendance has improved from 94.5% in 2013 to 95.4% in 2014. Even though there is an improvement in attendance, the school remains in the lower 50% when compared with similar schools.

## **Recommendation 3: Address the safeguarding matters noted in the inspection**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has fully addressed the issues that were noted during the last inspection. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Recommendation 4: Plan effectively for the progression and development of pupils' skills, particularly in numeracy, ICT and Welsh, across the curriculum**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has revised its curriculum planning effectively. This ensures that pupils have a range of worthwhile opportunities to practise and consolidate their numeracy, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Teachers plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are more able. As a result, standards have improved, particularly at the higher than expected levels at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. All teachers plan activities carefully against the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework to ensure progression in pupils' numeracy skills.

Teachers' planning in the Foundation Phase ensures a good range of teaching strategies for developing pupils' numeracy and ICT skills. There are many

opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, for example ordering and counting numbers to 20 in the 'Granny's Kitchen' role-play area and making simple tally charts and bar charts from a pupil survey about eye colour.

Effective planning in key stage 2 provides pupils with suitable opportunities to use and apply their numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum for different purposes and for wider audiences. This is a strong feature and results in many pupils demonstrating high levels of mathematical understanding and application of number, as seen in their work on percentages.

Teachers' planning for the development of pupils' ICT skills is comprehensive. It provides progressive coverage for a range of ICT skills across the areas of learning. In the Foundation Phase, many older pupils use a simple paint software package to produce firework pictures and younger pupils demonstrate appropriate mouse control and can change the colour, size and font of text with growing independence. In key stage 2, teachers provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to use their ICT skills across a wide range of subjects.

The provision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills and in developing their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales is good. The broad range of good quality resources has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the provision for Welsh. As a result, nearly all pupils show a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards learning Welsh and develop their language skills appropriately.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure that governors are familiar with the school's performance data and documentation, and contribute effectively to the self-evaluation process**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Most governors now have a clear understanding of the school's performance. The governing body benefits greatly from the appointment of several new governors with the skills and expertise to analyse data. Governors increase their knowledge appropriately through participating in training events within and beyond the school. They use this knowledge to challenge the school effectively. Most governors have strong working relationships with teachers. They participate regularly in meetings to discuss the curriculum, visit the school and receive presentations from teaching staff about areas of school improvement. This enables the governing body to understand all aspects of school improvement and to carry out its role as a critical friend well.

There are appropriate sub-committees, which enable governors to scrutinise the reports that they receive more rigorously. All meetings focus clearly on standards, provision and leadership of the school. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements appropriately. For example, there is a formal complaints procedure and a rolling programme to review all school policies. Governors monitor spending effectively.

The curriculum and standards sub-committee has been instrumental in driving forward the governors' role in self-evaluation. Visits to classes and the scrutiny of

pupils' books have led to a more robust understanding of standards and allow governors to make appropriate judgements about what is working well and what needs to improve. Most governors have attended training regarding the school's assessment system and have a better understanding of pupil assessment and of tracking pupil progress. They raise pertinent questions and ask for further information, as required.

The headteacher provides governors with detailed reports, including the self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan. They consider these carefully and now regularly challenge and hold the school to account for pupils' performance and attendance, and for the progress that the school is making in addressing the inspection recommendations.

**Recommendation 6: Develop more rigorous self-evaluation procedures that include effective monitoring and evaluation of pupils' standards and the quality of provision**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the appointment of a new headteacher the school has established a clear self-evaluation cycle that involves all staff and governors. Staff and governors are now more involved in determining school priorities and have a sense of ownership of the improvement process.

The senior management team, staff and governors share a strategic role in leading and monitoring targets for improvement. The leadership team have gathered information from recent pupil book scrutiny, lesson observations and learning walks to improve the quality of teacher feedback. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their work.

The school gathers information effectively from pupils to inform the school's self-evaluation document. For example, as part of a monitoring and evaluation activity, it seeks the views of pupils regarding their participation in numeracy lessons. This helps the school to develop strategies for improving their work.

The school uses data from a variety of sources effectively, including an electronic tracking system to target pupils with additional learning needs and pupils who are more able. As a result, these pupils receive work at an appropriate level to address their individual needs.

The school uses the outcomes of the self-evaluation process to provide an accurate and honest assessment of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders identify clear and measurable priorities for school improvement, focusing on improving pupils' outcomes. There is a strong link between the self-evaluation report and the school's improvement plan.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.