



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**St Michael's R.C. Primary School
John Place
Treforest
Pontypridd
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF37 1SP**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About St Michael's R.C. Primary School

St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School is in Treforest near Pontypridd in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are 231 pupils on roll, between the ages of 3 and 11 years, including 26 part-time nursery pupils. There are eight classes at the school.

Around 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the Wales average of 19%. The school identifies that around 14% of pupils have additional learning needs. This figure is below the Wales average of 21%. Approximately 70% of pupils are of white British ethnicity. The remaining 30% of the schools population are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Of these, around 20% of pupils speak English as an additional language competently. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The current headteacher took up post in September 2014 but was absent from the school at the time of the inspection. The school's previous inspection took place in September 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Most pupils at St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School achieve appropriate standards in mathematics and English by the time they leave the school. However, too few pupils make good enough progress from their individual starting points, especially in developing and applying their skills. Most pupils are considerate and many behave well. However, too few pupils show resilience and determination or the capacity to work independently.

Many adults have good working relationships with pupils. However, the quality of teaching, the design and delivery of the curriculum and the provision to develop pupils' skills is weak. It does not enable pupils to make the progress they should. The school's arrangements to provide care and support for pupils are not robust enough.

Senior leaders have not developed a coherent vision for the education and wellbeing of pupils. They do not provide effective strategic direction to the school's work or demonstrate the capacity to bring about improvement. This means that too many aspects of the school's provision are unsatisfactory and do not meet pupils' needs well enough.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Care, support and guidance	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Establish a shared strategic vision, sense of purpose and corporate responsibility
- R2 Improve the quality of classroom practice so that teaching and learning ensures that all pupils make the progress they are capable of making
- R3 Develop effective leadership and communication systems to support the school to work effectively from day-to-day and over time
- R4 Improve school self-evaluation and improvement processes to involve all stakeholders and raise standards
- R5 Address the shortcomings in safeguarding identified during the inspection

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils join the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are equal to or slightly above those expected for their age. By the end of their time at the school, they achieve appropriate standards in mathematics and English. However, too few pupils make good enough progress from their individual starting points. In particular, pupils' progress in developing and applying skills across the curriculum is too slow. Pupils do not make sufficient progress across a breadth of subject areas, for instance in science and the creative arts.

In Year 2, most pupils read well. They use their knowledge of phonics to help them work out unfamiliar words. They make sensible predictions about what might happen next in stories and talk confidently about famous authors and books that they have enjoyed. By Year 6, most pupils read fluently from appropriately challenging texts. They speak articulately, for example to recount stories they have read. A few pupils demonstrate empathy and use engaging vocabulary and sensitive language when discussing the feelings of character with a facial deformity. Most show a good understanding of texts. They appreciate authors' use of humour and deduce the meaning of tricky phrases by using contextual clues.

By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils print letters neatly. They spell a suitable range of words correctly and use full stops and capital letters with increasing accuracy. A few more able pupils write at length, for example to retell traditional stories. They show a developing awareness of time connectives and use suitable descriptive vocabulary. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils write extensively in a suitable range of genres. For example, they write persuasively to encourage people to give blood. A few more able pupils use an extended range of punctuation well to enhance the quality of their work. However, too many pupils do not have a secure understanding of basic grammatical features of writing, such as sentence structure. They make repeated errors in their use of full stops and capital letters. Pupils do not make enough progress in improving the quality of the content of written pieces in lessons or over time and do not apply their writing skills well enough in their work across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop appropriate number skills. For example, they order 2-digit numbers correctly by size and work out the difference between the prices of a bus or train ticket by subtracting one from the other. They develop a suitable understanding of standard measures. However, very few pupils use their mathematical skills independently in other areas of learning. By Year 6, many pupils have suitable calculation skills. Most use a range of strategies effectively, for example to multiply decimals. Increasingly, pupils use number skills effectively in combination, for example to solve problems about the number of doughnuts they can buy for £10. Most show an appropriate understanding of the properties of shape and concepts such as symmetry. However, too often, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills at a high enough level in their work across the curriculum. In particular, pupils do not interpret data effectively or draw conclusions from their findings, for example in science. On many occasions, this work is inaccurate and untidy.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make limited progress in developing and applying ICT skills. Many nursery and reception pupils use tablet devices independently, for example to load games or to control on screen figures. By Year 6, most pupils use a narrow range of ICT skills appropriately. For example, they incorporate text and images into e-books to present their work about famous inventors and input data into basic spreadsheets. However, overall, pupils do not use ICT purposefully to support or enhance their learning.

Many foundation phase pupils develop a suitable understanding of the Welsh language. They are keen to use their Welsh to ask questions to classmates and visitors, for instance to find out what types of food others like. They pronounce familiar words well and use them correctly in an appropriate range of sentence patterns. By Year 6, many pupils respond confidently to questions about the weather and holidays, and their likes and dislikes. They use a range of sentence patterns in the present and past tense at an appropriate standard. Many pupils read with broadly accurate pronunciation, but do not show a strong understanding of texts. With the help of writing scaffolds, they produce extended pieces of work, for example about a visit to the town.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils are confident and keen to speak to visitors. Generally, they relate well to each other and consider other people's needs. Many are respectful to their peers and to adults.

A majority of pupils behave very well and take responsibility for their own actions, especially when they enjoy their work. However, a minority find it difficult to behave well, particularly when their tasks are not engaging enough. Many pupils concentrate for an appropriate length of time, although a minority find it very difficult to avoid distractions from their peers.

A few pupils have additional leadership roles, which they enjoy, for example as part of the school senedd and eco committee. They speak proudly about their work to improve the school environment by planting flowers to attract bees.

On a few occasions, pupils work well independently. For example, in the nursery class, pupils use class log-ins to access programmes on tablet computers, and in Year 6, a majority of pupils select suitable mathematical strategies to solve problems independently. Across the school, a few pupils know how to improve their work successfully. However, overall too few pupils show determination to work independently. A few are anxious about making mistakes in their books. Across the school, too many wait passively for a friend or an adult to come and help them when they find their work difficult, rather than persevering and developing the resilience they need to cope with challenging tasks.

In the foundation phase, pupils have recently started to contribute their ideas about things they would like to do in their classrooms. For example, pupils in Year 1 chose to make three-dimensional aliens and rockets as part of their topic about space. However, across the school, pupils do not have enough of a say in what and how they learn, for example by choosing how to present their work.

Many pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and around school and online. Many know who to turn to if they are worried or upset. Many enjoy taking part in physical activities, for example through the range of sports club in school and locally. However, although pupils speak confidently about healthy eating, too many do not make healthy choices about their diet, for instance eating crisps and chocolate at break times and drinking sugary drinks through the day.

Pupils' attendance places the school consistently above the mean, compared to similar schools. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time in the mornings.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Many adults have positive working relationships with pupils and many classrooms are calm and orderly. A few teachers provide pupils with engaging activities in individual lessons. However, a majority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve and do not ensure that pupils use available learning time productively. For example, teachers do not always ensure that lessons start promptly and they allocate too much valuable time to low-level tasks, such as colouring in worksheets. Overall, the standard of teaching is unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement.

There is no whole-school strategy to plan for the progression in pupils' skills development. This limits teachers' ability to assess pupil progress and plan next steps for learning successfully. As a result, in too many instances teachers' planning focuses on the activities that pupils will complete rather than the skills they will learn. Teachers do not consistently set effective learning goals for lessons. They do not adapt the level of challenge well enough to meet individual pupils' needs. This means that, across the school, pupils repeat tasks at a similar level and do not make the progress they should.

Teachers have worked to improve the quality of their feedback to pupils. However, this work is at an early stage of development and is not yet effective in informing pupils about how to improve their work. In a few instances, teachers' marking is inaccurate. Generally, feedback and teachers' questioning do not support the learning process well enough. Adults do not have a good understanding of when to intervene and when to allow pupils to learn or make mistakes independently.

Recently, teachers have started to improve provision in the foundation phase. For example, they now provide pupils with suitable opportunities to learn outside. However, overall, staff do not have a strong enough understanding of the principles and pedagogy of the foundation phase. Throughout the foundation phase, adults direct pupils' learning too often and pupils have too few opportunities to make choices about how or what they learn. This limits the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

The school's curriculum is not broad and balanced. The range of learning experiences, for example in science and the creative arts, is limited and does not meet pupils' needs. Sequences of lessons do not build progressively on pupils' prior knowledge and experience.

The school's provision for Welsh supports most pupils to make suitable progress in acquiring the language. There are worthwhile opportunities to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales through a range of visits and participation in eisteddfodau.

Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Adults provide pupils with helpful emotional and social support. For example, teaching assistants deliver worthwhile interventions to a few pupils in Years 2 and 3, which helps them to improve their reading, mathematical and social skills. Many teachers devise their own systems to encourage good behaviour and ensure that their classrooms are orderly. However, across the school, the systems for rewards and sanctions are too varied. Leaders do not record, monitor or evaluate serious incidents of unacceptable behaviour well enough. As a result, the school does not identify patterns or triggers, or know whether initiatives, such as using pupils as play leaders are successful.

Recent improvements to the provision for pupils with identified additional learning needs have begun to bring consistency and rigour to the school's systems. However, teachers' planning and day-to-day classroom practice does not always take precise enough account of these pupils' individual needs. In addition, the targets set in individual education plans are not specific or measurable enough to secure consistently good progress. Over the past year, teachers have reviewed these plans regularly with pupils and their parents. However, the reviews do not always result in suitable new targets that build on the progress pupils have made. There are valuable links with specialist services, for instance to provide worthwhile support for adults working with pupils who have medical needs or statements of special educational needs.

Teachers assess all pupils regularly and record the information on an electronic tracking system. However their assessments do not always focus sharply enough on the skills that pupils have mastered and use independently. Leaders make appropriate use of the tracking system to inform regular pupil progress meetings with teachers, which are useful in identifying pupils at risk of falling behind. However, the strategic management of the system is not cohesive or sophisticated enough for leaders to identify how well different groups of pupils progress over time, or to evaluate where progress accelerates or slows.

The school works in partnership with many parents to benefit pupils. For example the recent 'clean up Saturday' provided a good opportunity for a range of stakeholders to work together to improve the school environment. Parents appreciate the recent improvements in communications, for example using social media and the new website. There are examples of valuable communication, such as to follow up on pupil absence and ensure good attendance. However, over time, channels of communication have been inconsistent.

The school's safeguarding procedures do not meet requirements and cause concern. The school's record-keeping processes for safeguarding training and pre-employment checks are not rigorous enough. In addition, leaders do not have robust, strategic procedures to assess and manage risk.

The school does not make appropriate provision for healthy eating and drinking. In most classes, adults do not challenge pupils' consumption of sweets, crisps and high fat snacks at breaktimes. Pupils are encouraged to bring a drinks bottle each day, but this often contains sugary drinks. Pupils do not have access to drinking water throughout the school day.

There are worthwhile opportunities to develop pupils' social, moral and cultural understanding. For example, the choir recently performed at the Urdd eisteddfod, and pupils regularly take part in sporting competitions and tournaments. Pupils collect stationery to send to a link school in Uganda, to support pupils less fortunate than themselves. These opportunities provide a sense of pride and achievement, and develop a sense of community and belonging. However, overall the provision for pupils' spiritual development requires improvement.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

In recent weeks, the acting headteacher has worked hard to provide visible and approachable leadership to the school. Since January 2018, the school has begun to respond positively to the findings of a local authority review and leaders have made early progress in improving a few aspects of provision. For example, collaborative work with another school has led to a whole school approach to developing outdoor learning.

Overall, senior leaders do not provide effective strategic direction to the school's work. They have not developed a coherent vision for the education and wellbeing of pupils. As a result, staff have not developed a sense of corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their care. Senior leaders have not developed systems to enable the school to run smoothly from day-to-day or over time. This means that too many aspects of the school's provision are unsatisfactory and do not meet pupils' needs well enough. For example, senior leaders do not have a strategic overview and vision for a curriculum that meets the needs of learners.

Communication between senior leaders and the other staff is weak. This limits adults' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, the school's strategic priorities and their capacity to work together as a team. There have been recent improvements to communication between the school and home. For example, staff use social media to share useful information about school events. However, senior leaders do not communicate effectively with parents about very important issues such as complaints, pupils' individual additional learning needs and instances of unacceptable behaviour. They do not always address these issues in a timely manner and to a satisfactory conclusion.

Senior leaders do not define the roles and responsibilities of staff, including those in leadership roles, well enough. Staff in leadership roles at all levels receive insufficient time, resources and support to enable them to undertake leadership duties. They do not monitor progress well enough as pupils move through the school. Consequently, they are largely unsuccessful in bringing about improvements at a whole school level.

Senior leaders monitor aspects of teaching, including a recent drive to improve the quality of marking and feedback to pupils, through activities such as lesson

observations and scrutiny of pupils' books. However, leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching strategies by considering their impact on the standards and progress that pupils achieve. This means that senior leaders do not have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school.

The school's arrangements to evaluate and improve its work are underdeveloped. They do not involve all members of staff, or pupils and parents. As a result, these groups do not feel they have a stake in school improvement. Too many members of the school community are unaware of the school's strengths, priorities for improvement and their role in achieving these goals. This includes the school's governing body, which does not have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have not held school leaders to account for the standards and progress of pupils. This limits the schools capacity to drive improvement initiatives forward.

Leaders use the pupil development grant appropriately to support pupils eligible for free school meals through a range of appropriate intervention strategies. As a result, these pupils improve their basic skills and levels of wellbeing appropriately. However, leaders do not plan strategically to use available finance to support continuous improvement, for example to support the professional development of staff. Plans for expenditure lack detail and arrangements to monitor the schools finances are not robust. The school does not use the funding it has well enough.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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