



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: special measures**

**St Richard Gwyn Roman Catholic High School
Albert Avenue
Flint
CH6 5JZ**

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by

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

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Outcome of monitoring

St Richard Gwyn Roman Catholic school is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2016.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards, particularly at key stage 4

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has focused its efforts well on developing suitable strategies to raise the achievement of pupils in key stage 4, especially in English and mathematics. The school monitors pupil progress closely and employs a suitable range of interventions to support pupils. This had a very positive impact on outcomes at the end of key stage 4 in 2017.

The school improved its performance in most of the key indicators in key stage 4 in 2017. Pupils' performance in these indicators is now above that of pupils in similar schools and well above that at the time of the core inspection.

In 2017, at key stage 4, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics improved significantly and is better than at the time of the core inspection. This performance is above modelled outcomes and places the school in the top 25% of similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals having been in the bottom 25% for each of the previous three years.

Performance in the capped point score in 2017 is above that at the time of the core inspection. It is broadly in line with modelled outcomes though remains in the lower 50% of similar schools. Performance in the level 1 threshold has been variable over the last three years and remains in the lower 50% of similar schools. Performance in the level 2 threshold places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools after being in the bottom 25% for the previous three years.

The proportion of pupils gaining five A*- A GCSE grades at key stage 4 has improved each year since the core inspection. However, in 2017, performance in this indicator continues to place the school below the average of similar schools. Performance in English improved significantly in 2017 and places the school in the top 25% of similar schools for the first time in five years. Performance in mathematics also improved in 2017 and is similar to that at the time of the core inspection. This places the school in the top 25% of similar schools.

Since the core inspection, the performance of boys has fallen slightly but the performance of girls has improved significantly. In most indicators, boys and girls perform better than their counterparts in similar schools. In the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has been above the average of this group of pupils in similar schools for two of

the last three years.

In key stage 3, performance in the core subject indicator has improved since the core inspection and, in 2017, places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools for the first time in three years.

Since the core inspection, in Year 13, the proportion of pupils that achieve the level 3 threshold has fluctuated but remains above the national average. The performance of pupils in the average wider points score also remains above national averages. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at A-level or equivalent has declined and is well below the average across Wales for the last two years. The proportion of pupils that gained three grades A* or A has fluctuated and is below the national average.

Nearly all pupils behave well and display positive attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations and the views of other pupils. They work productively in pairs and groups, and sustain concentration well.

In many lessons, pupils make suitable progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. In a few lessons, they make strong progress. Many pupils recall previous learning well and the majority apply their skills and knowledge successfully to new contexts.

Many pupils speak clearly and explain their ideas well. They participate in classroom discussion and contribute eagerly, for example, when discussing characters in 'Heroes' in English. Many pupils engage successfully with a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction texts such as poems, novels and reports. They extract information competently and draw accurate conclusions such as determining the best treatment of illnesses in biology. However, only a few pupils analyse texts in depth and detail, and make sufficient use of a wide vocabulary to explain their viewpoints fully.

Many pupils organise their written work appropriately. The majority of pupils write suitably for different audiences and purposes through, for example, personal reflective writing, persuasive speeches, letters and newspaper articles. A few pupils write maturely, vary sentence types skilfully and have a rich vocabulary. However, a majority of pupils do not express themselves well enough. For example, they have sound ideas but weak expression, and poor presentation detracts from the quality of their work.

Many pupils apply their basic numeracy skills successfully where appropriate and show confidence in selecting suitable strategies, for example, in solving equations and rearranging formulae. Many pupils display and analyse data suitably. For example, in science lessons they draw appropriate line graphs to show the effect of different concentrations of bleach on bacteria.

Recommendation 2: Improve the co-ordination and planning for progression in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has taken valuable steps to strengthen provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. All subject areas provide appropriate opportunities to practise skills in relevant contexts and many teachers provide suitable support for pupils to develop their skills in lessons. Coordinators support departments well, for example by providing training, advising on the quality of tasks, and helping formulate success criteria and feedback policies. In addition, members of the mathematics and English departments provide support and guidance to other subject areas. While this work is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' skills in all key stages, a minority of tasks do not develop pupils' skills well enough.

Leaders use assessment information appropriately to identify pupils in need of extra support to improve their skills. They use this information to plan appropriately for whole school literacy and numeracy development needs. However, the school does not have clear success criteria by which to measure the progress of pupils on all literacy intervention programmes.

Curriculum leaders have benefitted from opportunities to review books and share good practice. However, book reviews and lesson observations do not focus well enough on the standard of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, or on the impact that teaching and assessment is having on those skills.

Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of teaching and effectiveness of assessment

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Following the core inspection, there has been continued focus on improving teaching and assessment. This includes providing worthwhile opportunities for teachers to share good practice. This has had a positive impact on standards at the end of key stage 4 but has not had sufficient impact on the development of pupils' skills in lessons.

In most lessons, teachers have good working relationships with pupils. They have sound subject knowledge and are good language models. Nearly all teachers start lessons purposefully with well-established routines.

Many teachers plan lessons well with activities that build appropriately upon prior learning and enable pupils to make suitable progress. A very few teachers, through highly effective planning, enable pupils to make very strong progress. A majority of teachers have suitable expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide an appropriate level of challenge. These teachers provide useful examples of the standard of work expected. However, a minority of teachers do not provide sufficient challenge or plan work that meets the needs of all pupils, including the more able, well enough. In these lessons, the pace of learning is inappropriate and pupils do not make enough progress.

Many teachers provide pupils with useful verbal and written feedback on how they can improve their work. Many focus well on the accuracy of pupils' written work. As a result, many pupils respond appropriately by correcting errors or redrafting work in

the light of teachers' comments. A few teachers annotate pupils' written work closely to highlight areas for development. A majority of teachers question pupils well to stimulate discussion and encourage them to extend their answers successfully. They check pupils' understanding frequently and a few use this information highly effectively to provide immediate, targeted feedback to the class and individual pupils. These strategies enable pupils to build on their subject skills and improve the quality of their work effectively.

The quality of assessment remains too variable. A minority of teachers do not question effectively enough to extend pupils' thinking. A similar proportion provide written comments that are too general or focus exclusively on technical accuracy. In a few instances, teachers' feedback is overgenerous. As a result, pupils are not able to improve the quality of their work well enough.

Recommendation 4: Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels to ensure clear direction, high expectations and accountability in all areas of the school's work

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened significantly its leadership structures and accountability processes. These changes have had a positive impact on outcomes at key stage 4 and on the leadership and management skills of leaders at all levels.

The new headteacher provides assured leadership and a clear and well-understood vision for improvement. The leadership team has been reorganised and extended with leadership responsibilities now shared more widely. As a result, the team has strengthened and roles match the skills of individual leaders well.

The school has provided valuable training and guidance on important aspects of leadership, including data analysis and self-evaluation. It has also established regular opportunities for leaders to share good practice. Consequently, leaders now understand their roles and responsibilities well and work collaboratively towards achieving shared goals.

The school has strengthened and improved its accountability systems. There is now a clear calendar of useful quality assurance activities and a structured programme of regular meetings at all levels. These meetings focus appropriately on pupil progress and standards, and are helpful in holding leaders to account and raising expectations. For example, data review meetings offer suitable challenge on outcomes at all key stages. However, a few meetings are not effective enough, particularly in terms of the level of challenge offered, the degree of follow up from one meeting to the next, and the focus on teaching and learning.

The school has recently revised its performance management arrangements but the changes are at a very early stage of development. Objectives are generally suitable and there are clear links with professional development. The school has dealt appropriately with underperformance.

The interim executive board, established following the core inspection, is well informed and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is providing more support and challenge to the school than at the time of the core inspection.

Despite the significant improvements brought about by strong leadership, it has not had enough impact on a few areas of the school's work. These areas include attendance, aspects of teaching and assessment, and the provision for developing the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning arrangements

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, improved quality assurance arrangements are helping the school to focus well on what needs to improve. The headteacher and the interim executive board have provided clarity about the purpose of self-evaluation and its value for improvement planning. This has resulted in much improved pupil achievement, particularly at key stage 4.

The school has considerably strengthened self-evaluation and planning. The links between whole school and team self-evaluations and improvement priorities are clear. For example, the priorities to increase attainment at higher levels and to improve attendance are based clearly on evaluation of outcomes and data. Middle leaders are now far more aware of the value of data, how to interpret it and make use of it to improve standards within their areas of responsibility. Many leaders analyse performance data rigorously in order to reach a realistic view of outcomes.

There is a clear and well-understood cycle of self-evaluation activities, this includes lesson observations, work scrutiny, thematic reviews, peer observations, support and challenge meetings, pupil voice activities, parent surveys and data reviews. These focus appropriately on the overarching school priorities. Leaders at all levels make purposeful use of the findings from these activities and regularly review the whole-school and team self-evaluations.

The regular lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work are contributing appropriately to leaders' understanding of key strengths and areas for improvement in relation to teaching. However, scrutiny of work and lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on the progress of pupils and the standards of their skills. As a result, the school does not identify well enough specific weaknesses in relation to skills and aspects of teaching and assessment that need focused improvement.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to sustain the level of progress it has already made, and continue to address those inspection recommendations where further progress is required.