A report on

St Michael's R.C. Primary School
Baldwin Close
Newport
NP20 2LW

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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 the docklands area of Pillgwenlly near the city centre of Newport. There are currently 241 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11. Around 27% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 18%. The school identifies 12% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is lower than the national average of 21%.

The majority of pupils speak English at home. Around 46% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 39% speak English as an additional language. The headteacher has been in post since January 2014. The school's last inspection was in July 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

Pupils' wellbeing and family engagement are at the heart of St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School's vision and philosophy. All staff work hard to ensure that there is a caring and inclusive environment within the school. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress, their behaviour, and their very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school. All teachers and support staff have high expectations of pupils. Many pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills that are below those expected of pupils of a similar age.   Most pupils make good progress during their time at school, especially in their speaking and listening skills.

Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and exciting experiences and challenges to engage and enthuse pupils to learn. The school promotes pupils' understanding of their Welsh culture and heritage very well through its curriculum and activities.

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. Together with a conscientious team, she is improving pupil outcomes, and raising pupils' and parents' aspirations successfully.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Good**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Good**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Good**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that the pace of teaching and learning in lessons consistently challenges pupils to make the progress they are capable of making

R2 Improve the provision for the development of pupils' independent learning skills

R3 Sharpen school improvement targets to evaluate the impact on pupil outcomes more clearly

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils have literacy and numeracy skills that are below those expected of pupils of a similar age. During their time at school, most pupils make good progress, especially in their speaking and listening skills. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets.

In both the foundation phase and key stage 2, nearly all pupils listen attentively to adults and to each other. They respond to instructions and questions confidently and express their opinions clearly. Many pupils use a mature vocabulary naturally in conversation. For example, more able pupils in the reception class explain clearly how a pebble can float on a wooden raft, and that an object that does not float at the surface or sink to the bottom is an 'anomaly'. Pupils in key stage 2 discuss their work in detail and explain their roles and responsibilities within the school clearly.

Most pupils use a range of effective reading strategies and read to a good standard. They enjoy reading and are keen to read aloud to adults. Younger foundation phase pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds successfully when tackling unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 2, many develop as fluent and confident readers. Most pupils in key stage 2 read confidently and maturely. They discuss the content of their books with enthusiasm and give sensible reasons for their choices of texts. Most use reference books purposefully to enhance their work, and can skim and scan for information effectively, for example when investigating what influences climate.

In the foundation phase, many pupils' writing skills are developing well. In Year 1, pupils are beginning to write complete sentences accurately. By the end of the foundation phase, more able pupils use speech marks correctly to include dialogue in their stories. Many plan their stories well using story maps to structure their extended pieces of writing when describing what happens to a lost dinosaur. In key stage 2 more able pupils produce writing of high quality that is lively and engages the interest of the reader well. They write to a high standard for a broad range of purposes and use paragraphs well to organise their work, for example when writing a well-balanced argument about the pros and cons of workhouses.

Nearly all pupils develop a sound knowledge of mathematical concepts as they move through the school so that they are confident mathematicians by the time they reach Year 6. They develop a good understanding of mathematical language from an early age. For example, many pupils in the nursery class describe and name different shapes. They talk about measurements and volume during cooking activities, for example when making autumn stew. Most pupils gain a strong understanding of number, and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum suitably. By the end of Year 2, nearly all pupils solve number problems confidently and recall number facts appropriately, by applying previous learning in new situations. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils are confident in applying their mathematical skills across the curriculum. For example Year 6 pupils construct accurate line graphs to compare temperature and rainfall in Greece as part of their topic work. A majority have a sound understanding of multiplication and place value, and they use data with increasing accuracy and present it in different forms.

Most pupils develop a good understanding of the Welsh language. They respond well to instructions and requests given in Welsh. Many pupils are eager to use the language. By Year 2, many use familiar words and phrases confidently and respond well to instructions from staff during lessons. The most able, older pupils translate paragraphs from Welsh to English independently, and use familiar language patterns to write simple sentences about themselves and their hobbies confidently.

Many pupils develop strong information and communication technology (ICT) skills. By Year 2, most pupils' ICT skills are developing soundly. They are able to input information into a spreadsheet in order to create a bar chart with support and they are able to control a programmable toy independently. By the end of key stage 2, pupils create their own persuasive movie trailers by using green screen technology and animation techniques successfully. They also create their own electronic books to share with their peers.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils have a positive view of their school life and feel safe, secure and happy. They know where to seek support and are confident that adults will support them to resolve issues should they arise. Nearly all pupils show respect and courtesy to other pupils, staff and visitors. They listen to and value others' views and contributions. They understand the importance of fairness and equality.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour around the school buildings and within classes is very good. Older pupils play an active part in caring for younger pupils through a buddying arrangement and members of the School Care Group help to foster positive relationships between their peers at lunch and break times.

Most pupils are well motivated and keen to learn, and engage well with learning activities. They work effectively in pairs, within small groups and individually. In many classes, they show good perseverance when tackling difficult or extended pieces of work and when undertaking problem-solving exercises. For example, pupils in the lower foundation phase work together purposefully when building block towers and use their thinking skills creatively when faced with problems such as the tower toppling.

Many pupils are actively involved in a wide range of effective committees that support the leadership and management of the school. For example, members of the Welsh Club organise and run games for the younger pupils at break time such as 'faint o'r gloch yw hi Mr Blaidd?', and members of the Fairtrade Group help organise cooking sessions and raise awareness of global issues. Highly effective digital leaders enjoy taking a lead in addressing technical issues within the class. They run training sessions for pupils and parents on eSafety and, as a result, nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking. They understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy food and drinks, have fruit during snack time and actively support and help organise healthy eating week. Nearly all pupils enjoy taking part in daily physical exercise activities. They understand the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The eco-committee have a good impact in establishing recycling at the school. They actively engage in the process by sorting food waste bins, recycling milk bottles, organising litter picking and recycling pens.

Over a half of pupils attend the extra-curricular clubs and activities that the school offers. Pupils design their own computer games during coding club and enjoy expressing themselves creatively during dance sessions.

Nearly all pupils arrive at school punctually and rates of attendance are very good.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

All teachers have high expectations of pupils. They make effective use of a variety of successful teaching methods, which ensure that most pupils achieve well and apply themselves successfully to their learning. There is a very effective working relationship between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils in all classes. This creates a calm and courteous environment where pupils behave well and respect each other's' contributions. However, in a minority of classes, the pace of learning is too slow at times. As a result, pupils do not always progress as well as they could.

Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well in order to find out what pupils understand and to stretch and develop their learning further. All adults support learning well. They are particularly good language role models and extend pupils' vocabulary successfully. This results in exceptionally high standards in oracy across the school.

Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Exciting learning experiences and challenges stimulate high levels of engagement and enthusiasm amongst pupils. Staff have a sound understanding of the principles and ethos of the foundation phase. They make suitable use of both the indoor and outdoor learning environments to develop pupils' skills, for example when experimenting with floating and sinking objects. As a result, pupils are curious, confident, independent learners, who enjoy experimenting.

Teachers use a range of assessment for learning strategies successfully. The quality of written and verbal feedback supports pupils well to identify their next steps in learning. Pupils have suitable opportunities to assess their own work and to discuss their work with a partner. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and make good use of this information to set targets for pupils to improve in numeracy and literacy. Pupils know their targets well and what they need to do in order to improve.

Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through themes and interesting learning experiences. They adopt a flexible approach to planning in the foundation phase and take account of pupils' interests and suggestions well. For example, teachers set up a fruit and vegetable role-play area in response to a pupil's suggestion. However, this practice is at an early stage of development in key stage 2.

Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills progressively as they move through the school. There are valuable opportunities for pupils, to learn about the culture and rich heritage of Wales in their locality and beyond. For example, pupils visit a number of historical sites such as Caerleon and Cardiff Castle. Displays around the school celebrate Welsh culture very effectively with the criw Cymraeg producing inspiring posters that encourage pupils to use the Welsh language as much as possible. Nearly all teachers and teaching assistants

use the Welsh language appropriately throughout the day. They ensure that all pupils use and hear the language regularly, for example when the criw Cymraeg take a whole school assembly. The school holds an annual eisteddfod that celebrates pupils' achievements and skills through the medium of Welsh.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides an inclusive and caring learning environment. All staff promote a strong sense of community and actively seek to involve parents in the life of the school through a range of highly effective initiatives and strategies. Family engagement activities include information for parents in how to support their children to develop their reading, mathematics and ICT skills. Craft workshops at Easter and Christmas provide valuable opportunities for parents to work with their children creatively and nursery and reception parents benefit from regularly taking home a 'Busy Bag' to develop pupil and parent skills. Other initiatives that involve parents include fundraising for local charities, class assemblies and productions, all of which further promote a sense of community and shared purpose.

School staff effectively track a wide range of performance data and keep detailed records of pupil progress to inform planning. Arrangements to assess pupils' wellbeing are effective. Staff are beginning to use this information well to identify pupils that require additional pastoral support.

The school's provision for pupils with additional needs is good. Staff identify pupils' needs through a range of screening assessments and employ a good range of interventions to support specific needs, for example to support   pupils with communication difficulties. Other pupils with personal and social needs receive a beneficial programme to support emotional literacy. Staff and parents contribute effectively to individual education plans that track the progress of pupils with additional needs well in relation to targets. The school works with a range of outside support agencies effectively to support the varied needs of additional needs pupils.

Staff prepare detailed annual reports for parents on their children's progress. These reports contain pupils' own comments. This promotes a sense of ownership, encourages pupils to reflect on progress made and to set future targets.

The school places a strong emphasis on healthy eating and the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils. Regular assemblies, an effective personal and social education curriculum and frequent opportunities for exercise help pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. Initiatives such as the fruit tuck shop and the successful healthy eating week re-inforce key messages successfully. The school delivers a comprehensive and clear message to parents and pupils about staying safe online.

The school has established a wide range of leadership roles for the pupils, which are effective in including the pupils' views and ideas into decision making and school management. For example, the Chaplaincy Group is effective in promoting pupils' rights linked to the core Catholic values of the school. The group takes an active role in planning and delivering assemblies. However, the school provides limited opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills within the context of lessons and the wider curriculum.

The school's provision for developing pupils' moral and social development is good. Planned lessons in personal and social education, religious education and collective worship all contribute to a clear messages relating to respect, tolerance and human rights. The school supports local charities, for example a local foodbank, and gives pupils good opportunities to reflect on different cultures and religions. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Class assemblies and productions are a regular feature of school life and pupils have opportunities to perform to their peers, their parents and their community. For example. Year 5 pupils recently sang as part of a collaborative performance in a local theatre, developing their creative and performance skills.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. She places family engagement and pupils' wellbeing at the heart of the school's vision and philosophy. All staff work hard to ensure there is a caring and inclusive environment. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress and their very positive attitudes to learning. Together with an effective and hardworking leadership team, the headteacher is improving pupil outcomes, and raising pupils' and parents' aspirations successfully.

Arrangements to distribute leadership roles and to hold staff to account for the quality and impact of their work are developing suitably. All members of staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility for securing continuous improvement, and they carry out their roles well. Regular meetings to discuss pupil progress ensure that all teachers take responsibility for the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.

The school's processes to improve the quality of its provision and to raise standards are thorough. Leaders listen carefully to the views of parents and pupils, observe teaching regularly, and analyse data robustly. As a result, they have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders use this information well to identify suitable targets for improvement. These focus clearly on raising pupils' self-esteem and standards. Leaders have sharpened the focus of their monitoring activities, to evaluate more accurately the impact of these actions on pupil outcomes. However, on occasions the school's improvement priorities are too broad and focus on addressing too many aspects of its work at the same time. As a result, staff and governors do not always have a clear sense of where to focus their efforts and resources.

Overall, leaders ensure that strategic plans are successful in meeting national and local priorities. For example, teachers' plans to develop pupils' literacy and ICT skills across the curriculum are effective. As a result, most pupils make good progress in these key areas.

The governing body supports the school's work well. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's performance data and its strengths and areas for development. They play an active role in ongoing self-evaluation processes across the school. Teachers provide detailed action plans to the governing body to explain the progress and impact that initiatives make to the work and life of the school. Governors monitor expenditure prudently and ensure that spending decisions match the school's priorities for improvement accurately.

Staff meetings focus purposefully on ensuring that all teachers are involved in monitoring standards of achievement and the quality of provision. This has a positive impact on school practice. A notable example of success is the consistent approach to developing pupils' oracy and reading skills.

The school has effective performance management systems for all staff. Beneficial training arrangements support this process well. The school is keen to learn from others, as well as sharing its own good practice. This supports the school's capacity to bring about improvements, and provides teachers with worthwhile opportunities to measure and share their effectiveness with other professionals. A positive example of this is the development of pupils' Welsh language skills, and their enthusiasm for the language.

The school uses the pupil development grant purposefully. Leaders improve the wellbeing and achievement of pupils entitled to free school meals through highly effective intervention programmes. For example, the use of an online reading application to support reading at home helps parents to support their child's enjoyment of reading, and engages reluctant readers successfully.

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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