



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 Michael's R.C. Primary School  
John Place  
Treforest  
Pontypridd  
RCT  
CF37 1SP**

**Date of visit: December 2019**

**by**

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

## Outcome of visit

St Michael's R.C. Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

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

### **R1 Establish a shared strategic vision, sense of purpose and corporate responsibility**

The school has made very strong progress towards establishing a shared strategic vision and sense of purpose. Staff, pupils, governors, parents and the wider church community have worked together to create the 'St Michael's Way', which has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and achievement.

Leaders and staff work well together and have developed a shared responsibility for pupils' achievement. For example, staff now reflect on pupils' outcomes in their own planning and have regular meetings with the headteacher to monitor pupils' progress. Leaders develop constructive learning partnerships successfully throughout the school. As a result, all staff work together in a culture of openness and mutual support. This is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.

The chair of governors visits the school regularly and supports leaders well to develop and share their vision. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's current performance and strategic direction, and are beginning to realise their role in supporting the school to sustain the many recent improvements.

Leaders have developed effective systems to ensure that pupils support and contribute purposefully to the strategic vision of the school. For example, there is now a school senedd, which incorporates a wide variety of pupil-led groups, including those concerned with pupils' wellbeing and the rights of the child. Pupils from these groups understand their roles in contributing to school improvement. For example, the senedd organises the school's 'vision' week, leads and develops activities for their peers during enrichment Fridays, and work with a local technology company to improve the school's information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. This approach is recent, but it is already having a very positive influence on the strategic direction of the school.

### **R2 Improve the quality of classroom practice so that teaching and learning ensures that all pupils make the progress they are capable of making**

The substantive headteacher has worked with energy and determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. As a result, the provision in classrooms has improved markedly since the core inspection. The shared 'St Michael's Way' means that all staff understand leaders' requirements of their work, and pupils' progress.

In many classes across the school, teachers plan tasks that engage pupils well at a suitable level of challenge. In these classes, the provision gives pupils opportunities to think for themselves and develop their independence as learners. For example, in the nursery and reception class, adults have the confidence not to intervene too soon. They allow pupils to persevere and work things out for themselves. In Years 5 and 6, teachers plan tasks that support pupils to develop their processing skills and organise their own work. As a result, many pupils apply themselves to a task or challenge that they have chosen with sustained concentration for an extended period. In addition, in these instances, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good, because pupils are fully engaged in their learning.

In many classes, adults adjust the pace of learning well, and tasks engage most pupils to make good progress. However, in a few instances, the pace of learning is not matched well enough to pupils' abilities, and on a very few occasions, adults intervene too often. When this happens, pupils do not develop their independence skills well enough, and a minority of pupils become disengaged and lose concentration.

In the few classes where the practice is less strong, teachers often over-direct pupils' work. The pupils do not make enough decisions for themselves about their learning, for example about how to present their work or the order in which they should complete tasks. Generally, adults ask a well-chosen range of questions, targeted at pupils to prompt them to consider and articulate their thinking. Occasionally, adults ask too many closed questions that require simple one-word responses. When this happens, pupils do not always think carefully enough about their answers.

Across the school, many pupils make purposeful use of the developing outdoor learning environment. For example, in the foundation phase, in addition to worthwhile continuous and enhanced provision, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to learn in the forest school. Year 3 pupils have valuable opportunities to practise their numeracy skills outside, for example measuring the girths of trees as part of their science work on habitats.

Teachers work together in pairs, and this peer support has helped to improve their practice further. For example, the nursery and reception classes now work effectively as a single integrated provision, and in Years 5 and 6, flexible grouping across the two classes has enabled teachers to match work more closely to pupils' starting points. Most classrooms are now positive, engaging learning environments where pupils enjoy learning and make progress.

Teachers across the school use pink and green pens consistently, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy. They have worked to develop precise and clear 'green' comments, intended to help pupils to develop their skills, and in most classes, pupils act on their teacher's comments to improve their work. In addition, most teachers use a wide range of assessment techniques to gauge their pupils' learning during lessons, and identify areas for focus in future.

Leaders have continued to give a suitably high profile to the purposeful work to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The SEN team have clear responsibilities for co-ordinating pupils' individual educational plans and the links with specialist services. Class teachers take appropriate account of

these pupils' individual needs when they plan whole class activities. Worthwhile interventions support pupils who require additional support for a short period. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of these interventions well, for example their impact in improving pupils' standards of reading or wellbeing.

### **R3 Develop effective leadership and communication systems to support the school to work effectively from day-to-day and over time**

The school has experienced a number of significant staffing changes since the core inspection of June 2018, including a new, substantive headteacher and three teachers new to the school. The re-energised senior leadership team comprises the deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher, along with the special educational needs coordinator. These substantive appointments have provided much needed enthusiasm, drive and strategic direction to the school's work. In addition, the assessment co-ordinator has been seconded to the leadership team as a further assistant headteacher, to cover for a period of staff absence.

The headteacher has developed a culture of sharing, togetherness and belonging among staff and pupils. This has enabled the school community to work together successfully, for example to establish a shared vision and values of the 'St Michael's Way' for the school's future development. The headteacher has a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. She uses this information well to secure improvements.

Leaders now consider school finances carefully when planning for improvement. For example, the headteacher and governors considered carefully the financial benefits of restructuring the school's staffing against the likely impact on classroom provision, as part of their plan to reduce the current budget deficit.

Communication between the headteacher and staff is highly effective. All staff have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and expectations at the school. They know the school's strategic priorities and their role in securing the required improvements. There are appropriate routines to support important day-to-day aspects of the school's work. Staff receive useful information through a shared diary of events and regular meetings. These arrangements have a positive effect on the day-to-day life and work of the school.

### **R4 Improve school self-evaluation and improvement processes to involve all stakeholders and raise standards**

The headteacher quality assures and evaluates the school's work robustly. She has an accurate overview of the quality of classroom provision and a clear plan to develop the provision and improve pupils' standards further.

The headteacher has devised a suitable monitoring schedule that includes leaders at all levels, and keeps all staff informed about monitoring and review activities. She has provided guidance for less experienced leaders, which supports them to monitor the school's work systematically. Together, leaders undertake a robust programme of monitoring activities that are beginning to inform their accurate understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. For example, senior leaders listen to learners' views about their school, and are beginning to act on their findings to

improve the provision. They use this information to devise improvement priorities for example regarding assessment for learning, and the new curriculum. More recently, leaders have revisited monitoring activities to check that planned improvements have happened.

Leaders identified that, over time, teachers' assessment of what pupils can do has not been accurate enough, and have taken bold steps to recalibrate the assessment information. They have provided worthwhile support to ensure that all staff know how to assess pupils' achievements accurately. In addition, staff work together to moderate their assessments and share their expectations of pupils' progress. However, leaders rightly recognise that this recent recalibration of assessment information means that their tracking system does not yet provide a clear picture of the progress of groups of pupils, or robust evidence that, over time, all pupils make the progress they should.

The school has strengthened relationships with parents. Leaders receive feedback through the parent council and the parent teacher association, and through informative parents' meetings with the headteacher and governors. There are regular communications through social media and the school's website, and an app for pupils to share their work with their parents. In addition, parent questionnaires provide all parents with a platform to contribute their views to the school's self-evaluation processes.

The governing body has taken a more active role in providing leadership and direction to the school's work. A few governors visit the school regularly to see for themselves the improvements that have happened since the core inspection, the provision that pupils receive and the standards that they achieve as a result. Governors rightly recognise the need to extend this first-hand monitoring to the wider governing body, in order to assure themselves of the accuracy of reports they receive, and to stimulate discussion to support and challenge leaders.

## **R5 Address the shortcomings in safeguarding identified during the inspection**

Leaders have taken swift action to revise the safeguarding and anti-bullying policy documents and procedures. The school has shared its updated approaches with all stakeholders. There are clear systems and processes for staff to take urgent action when they have concerns about a child's wellbeing, or identify a safeguarding issue. In addition, adults have devised consistent, well-thought-through procedures to manage rare incidents of unacceptable behaviour, or any alleged bullying. As a result, all adults working in school are knowledgeable, resolute and determined in their work to keep their pupils safe.

The headteacher has worked with the local authority to provide suitable safeguarding training for new and existing members of staff. In addition, new senior leaders have received further training in additional aspects of safeguarding, to enable responsibilities to be shared appropriately between the leadership team.

Leaders have taken robust action to make the school buildings secure and to ensure that only authorised people can enter the building. There is also an appropriate lock down procedure.

Teachers now use a commercial recording system to consider and record the risks of trips and visits that take place out of school. The headteacher has instituted suitable new risk assessments wherever appropriate, or when she identifies a need, for example when there is a change of use for areas of the school. Leaders are developing an appropriate and proportionate understanding of the culture of assessing risk.

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