



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 Martin's School  
Hillside  
Caerphilly  
CF83 1UW**

**Date of visit: September 2016**

**by**

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

**© Crown Copyright 2016: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.**

**The monitoring team**

Mrs Sue Halliwell	Reporting Inspector
Mr Steven Davies	Team Inspector
Mr Stephen Pringle	Team Inspection

## Outcome of monitoring

St Martin's School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in April 2014.

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: Raise standards in key stage 4, particularly in the performance of girls, in the level 2 threshold and in science**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in April 2014, performance in all key stage 4 indicators has improved well. In 2015, performance improved but remained below the average for the family of schools in all indicators, the school remaining in the lower half of similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals.

Performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics was below modelled outcomes and boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals performed less well than these pupils in the family and nationally. However, the improvement in 2015 has continued and unverified data for 2016 suggests the best results in the last six years. In addition, performance in all indicators is well above the averages for the family and Wales last year. The performance of groups of pupils also improved significantly. Boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals achieved well above the outcomes for these groups in the school, family and Wales in 2015.

In lessons, nearly all pupils are attentive, concentrate well and focus conscientiously on their work. Many work well in pairs and in groups, listening carefully to others and building on their responses. Nearly all pupils behave very well and treat each other and their teachers respectfully.

Most pupils use a suitable range of vocabulary in their writing and a minority use a more sophisticated vocabulary confidently. As a result they write eloquently and to good effect. Many pupils write in well-organised sentences and paragraphs. They understand and apply well the conventions for answering key questions by making a point, explaining it and then supporting that point with evidence.

Many make frequent basic spelling errors but grammar and punctuation are generally accurate and at a level appropriate to their age and ability level.

Overall, most pupils demonstrate good reading skills. Many pupils are confident when reading aloud. A majority of pupils are able to summarise and categorise information from texts well. They use inference and deduction successfully when examining a range of sources.

Many pupils are confident in discussion and speak articulately. The majority of pupils give extended and thoughtful responses to teachers' questions. However, a few pupils speak too quickly and softly when giving formal presentations or reading their written work out to the class.

Most pupils display an appropriate understanding of key mathematical concepts. Many pupils use data and associated information successfully in a variety of ways to produce graphs, diagrams and charts. A few pupils struggle with basic numeracy tasks and a few are careless when producing diagrams and graphs.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve attendance and reduce the levels of persistent absenteeism**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the attendance of pupils has improved substantially and in 2016 is above modelled outcomes. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has also improved and is five percentage points higher than at the time of the core inspection. Persistent absence has fallen steadily since 2014 from 40.9% to 21.1% and is now in line with the family, local authority and Wales averages. Overall, these improvements place the school above local and national levels and in the top quarter when compared with similar schools based on free-school-meal eligibility.

Senior leaders monitor and analyse attendance data effectively and direct the work of staff well in implementing the school's attendance policies and procedures. Senior leaders and staff have been very successful in raising the profile of the importance of high attendance levels throughout the school. Clear expectations about the importance of good attendance and its impact on pupils' performance have increased and leaders now communicate this message to pupils and parents successfully.

### **Recommendation 3: Improve the consistency of teaching and assessment**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and assessment.

In nearly all lessons teachers have strong subject knowledge, establish effective relationships, and implement clear routines that have a positive impact on the ethos in the classroom and behaviour of the pupils.

In a few lessons where teaching is particularly effective, pupils make substantial progress. In these lessons, teachers ask incisive questions that challenge pupils robustly to explain, explore and develop their verbal and written responses.

In many lessons, teachers set clear objectives and explain activities well. They make effective use of starter tasks to spark discussion and engage pupils' interest. These teachers plan and structure their lessons well to encourage pupils to provide high quality responses and enable them to make good progress.

In a few lessons, teachers' questioning does not probe pupils' knowledge or understanding well enough. In these lessons, there is no clear link between the objectives and the activities and there is an inappropriate pace. As a result, pupils are 'busy' but they make little progress in learning.

The school has improved well the quality and consistency of marking and assessment. Many teachers give feedback that is focused on developing the quality of written work as well as improving subject knowledge and understanding. However, in a few subjects, there continues to be too much variation in the quality of feedback provided to pupils.

The majority of pupils respond well to teachers' comments. However, responses from a minority of pupils are superficial and have limited impact on improving the quality of their work.

#### **Recommendation 4: Improve the rigour and consistency of line management**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has established a rigorous and consistent approach to its line management processes. There is now a clear set of expectations that is understood well by all senior and middle leaders. This has helped leaders to make a significant impact on many important aspects of the school's work, for example the performance at key stage 4 of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Middle leaders are held to account robustly for performance in their area of responsibility. Regular meetings between senior and middle leaders focus clearly on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. This includes close monitoring of the progress of individual and groups of pupils. Action points are clearly identified and reviewed. Line managers also provide beneficial support for middle leaders to help them carry out their roles more effectively.

The line management of pastoral leaders is now fully aligned with the processes used in faculty areas. This has helped these leaders to make a substantial impact on outcomes, for example improved rates of attendance.

#### **Recommendation 5: Make sure that self-evaluation processes focus consistently on the progress of pupils**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened appropriately its self-evaluation processes. The whole-school self-evaluation report is a thorough and honest appraisal of the school's strengths and shortcomings and links closely to school improvement plan priorities. This has enabled leaders to identify accurately important areas for development and plan effective strategies to improve performance.

The school has developed a consistent approach to self-evaluation at middle leadership level which focuses well on the standards achieved by pupils. This

includes a thorough evaluation of the work of pastoral teams as well as subject areas. Many leaders analyse data well to monitor the progress and evaluate the performance of pupils.

Faculty reviews use a suitably wide range of first hand evidence to assess the effectiveness of subject areas. Lesson observations and book reviews are rigorous and identify clearly strengths and areas for development. In the majority of cases, these activities focus well on the impact of teaching and assessment on pupil standards. This has helped leaders to make substantial improvements to the effectiveness of teaching and assessment. However, in a minority of instances, leaders do not always pay enough attention to how well teaching and marking help pupils to progress.

**Recommendation 6: Refine the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders to focus on raising standards and improving teaching**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has been successful in reorganising its leadership structure at a senior and middle level to focus clearly on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. This has enabled leaders to make a substantial impact on pupil outcomes.

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been reorganised appropriately to match their capacity and experience. These roles are now balanced suitably and are understood clearly by all staff. The secondment of middle leaders to the senior team has been effective in improving specific areas of the school's work, for example the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals at key stage 4.

The school has also restructured middle leadership roles. This has been effective in strengthening line management and self-evaluation processes as well as establishing a beneficial culture of collaboration and the sharing of good practice.

<b>Recommendations</b>
------------------------

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.