

**A report on**

**St John the Baptist Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Chester Road  
Penymynydd  
Flintshire  
CH4 0EN**

**Date of inspection: 4 - 5 May 2011**

**by**

**Wil Williams**

**Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn**

**for**

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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## Context

The school is situated in the village of Penmynydd and serves a rural catchment area. The school building is over 150 years old, but has been refurbished in the past fifteen years. The accommodation includes four main classrooms, a hall, outside areas and a nearby recreational field. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds that are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged.

The school is organised into four mixed-aged classes. Currently there are 116 pupils on roll, which include 14 part-time nursery children. Pupils are admitted to the nursery class on a part-time basis at the beginning of the academic year following their third birthday. They start full-time education at the beginning of the academic year during which they will be five.

All pupils come from English-speaking homes. None uses Welsh as a first language or comes from an ethnic minority background.

Children's ability on entry to the reception class is similar to the local authority (LA) average. Approximately 3 per cent of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is considerably below the local and national averages. Ten per cent of pupils have additional learning needs (ALN), which is lower than LA and national averages..

There have been no significant changes to the school since it was last inspected in April 2005.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for St John the Baptist School is £2974 which compares with a maximum of £7635 and a minimum of £2660 for primary schools in Flintshire. The school has the 49th highest budget per pupil out of the 74 primary school in Flintshire.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- leaders, staff and governors have a clear vision for the school's development;
- attainment over the past three years has generally been slightly higher than local and national figures;
- most pupils learn effectively and achieve good standards in key skills; and
- both teaching and learning experiences are of a consistently high standard.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- self evaluation is used purposefully to raise standards and improve provision;
- expectations of pupil outcomes are high;
- staff are self-critical and continuously strive to improve practice and provision; and
- leaders and staff are well supported by good quality professional development.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 at the end of key stage 2 (KS2);
- R2 ensure incidental Welsh is used more consistently across the school;
- R3 provide a clearer focus on learning outcomes in the school improvement plan (SIP); and
- R4 establish stronger links with industry and commerce.

### What happens next?

*The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.*

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

In lessons, and over time, nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning. Most recall previous learning well and acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills confidently and develop good problem-solving skills. Most pupils apply their communication skills very capably, achieving high standards in speaking, listening and writing. Nearly all apply their numeracy skills securely in a range of contexts and are confident users of information communications technology (ICT). By KS2, nearly all pupils have developed effective problem solving and thinking skills.

Pupils across the school make good progress in Welsh language development. Foundation Phase children respond positively to greetings and instructions with the more confident expressing their needs clearly through simple learned phrases. As pupils progress through KS2, the majority speak, read and write Welsh competently.

Baseline assessment results in the key skills of language and literacy show that, when children start in the reception class, they encompass the full ability range. By the end of KS1, nearly all achieve the outcomes expected for their age and ability.

During the past three years pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages has more often than not, been better than both LA and national results. The percentages achieving the core subject indicator (CSI), which is the expected level in each of the three core subjects, have also generally been slightly higher than local and national figures. They have also been higher than other schools facing similar challenges. Although KS2 results in oracy and reading over the last three years have been in line with family averages, results for writing have been slightly lower.

In 2010 KS1 and KS2, pupil performance in all three subjects was slightly higher than local and national figures and also better than most other schools facing similar challenges. The percentage who achieved the CSI in both key stages was also higher than local and national results. When KS1 results are compared with other schools with a similar percentage entitled to receive free school meals, results were in the lowest 50 per cent for English and in the highest 50 per cent for mathematics and science. In KS2, results for English, mathematics and the CSI were in the highest 50 per cent whereas science was in the lowest 50 per cent.

The percentages of KS1 pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in either English and/or science were slightly higher than those in schools facing similar challenges, but were a little lower in mathematics. In KS2, the percentages of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics were slightly better than national and LA results and those of school in similar circumstances but were significantly higher in science.

There was no significant difference in 2010 between the percentage of girls and boys who attained the expected levels in the core subjects at the end of both key stages. Nearly all pupils, including those entitled to free school meals and the less able, make good progress throughout the Foundation Phase and key stages 1 and 2.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils face new experiences and challenges confidently and are keen to inquire and ask questions. Most are highly engaged and motivated and display pride and confidence in their work. Attitudes to learning are very positive throughout the school with all pupils fully engaged in the task at hand and contributing effectively to group and class discussions. Nearly all have the skills needed to improve their own learning, work with others and solve problems.

Pupils of all ages are considerate and courteous and relate very well to each other and adults, demonstrating exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have positive attitudes to healthy living and eating.

Attendance has steadily improved during the past three years and is currently above the median when compared with similar schools. Nearly all pupils are punctual.

As they mature, most pupils very readily undertake responsibilities and, through the school council, the eco-committee and other activities, play an active part in the school and the community. Pupils are confident that their voice is being heard and they are effectively involved in planning school improvements.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

Teachers and practitioners collaborate very effectively to plan flexible and imaginative activities, which succeed in engaging the interests of the full range of pupils. Stimulating and often innovative learning experiences, both in and outdoors, ensure that pupils are challenged by relevant activities that provide continuity and progression in their learning. Effective learning support programmes enable all pupils to take part fully in every activity.

There is good planning for the development of all key learning skills across the curriculum. The promotion of thinking skills remains an under developed area.

Planning and provision for Welsh language development is thorough in most classes and well-suited to pupils' ages and ability. There is good provision for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of Wales.

The school works very closely with the local church and also contributes regularly to local events in the community. However, links with local commercial or industrial organisations are very limited.

The very productive links which the school has forged with other countries and cultures enable pupils to become more aware of their role as global citizens. The school acts sustainably and pupils are actively involved with conserving energy and minimising waste.

## **Teaching: Good**

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All teachers have wide subject knowledge and have successfully undertaken new initiatives, such as assessment for learning, which they use effectively in their teaching. The Foundation Phase is well-established and has enriched children's learning significantly. Teachers and practitioners use a variety of strategies effectively to motivate pupils and to incorporate key skills into lessons. Nearly all pupils are suitably challenged by activities that are well matched to their ability and stage of development. Support staff are actively involved in planning lessons and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning and the standards achieved. Although the majority of teachers integrate incidental Welsh effectively into their teaching, this is not consistently applied in all classes.

The practice of encouraging pupils to set their own targets has led to greater motivation and higher expectations. The well-established and very clear systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress enable staff to identify any instances of low performance and to take remedial action when necessary. Assessment information is used purposefully in all classes to plan the next steps in learning.

Parents are kept well informed about their children's achievements and targets through comprehensive annual reports and regular meetings with staff.

## **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is a caring community which values the contribution of each individual. There are effective procedures to support pupils' health and wellbeing, as well as to encourage their active involvement in their school and the wider community. These arrangements, together with the school's ethos and values, contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff know pupils well and strive to ensure that the needs of each individual are met.

There are good procedures and systems for the identifying pupils with ALN, including pupils with special education needs (SEN). These pupils are well supported both in and out of the classroom. Learning support assistants and outside agency support are providing an effective, specialised level of care and support. Pupils' individual educational plans (IEP) include clear targets, which are regularly evaluated and updated. Parents are informed and involved in all stages of the provision.

Appropriate provision is made for the more able and talented (MAT) pupils with many benefiting substantially by working with a group of older pupils.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding.

## **Learning environment: Good**

The school provides an all-inclusive learning environment in which all pupils are treated fairly in accordance with its equality policies. Teaching and learning resources are of good quality and in sufficient quantity to ensure the curriculum is taught effectively. Staff work well to develop a positive ethos for learning. They encourage all pupils to participate fully in the life of the school.



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The accommodation is of good quality and classrooms are adequate for the number of pupils on roll. It is very well maintained and contains many attractive and informative displays of pupils' work and achievements.

Teachers and support staff are suitably qualified and are generally deployed effectively.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Leadership: Good**

The senior management team (SMT) works closely together to create a clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff and governors. High expectations are communicated and this has a good influence on standards and well-being across the school. All staff work together to foster a positive whole-school ethos where pupils feel valued. Staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. Regular staff meetings effectively promote the dissemination of training and new initiatives.

Performance management (PM) is implemented in line with statutory requirements and the arrangements include all members of staff. Training needs are planned appropriately to meet both individual and school priorities. The PM process is closely linked to school improvement strategies and this impacts positively on the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Governors are well informed about the performance of the school and the issues that affect it. Data on pupils' attainment is scrutinised and trends in performance identified carefully. Through their involvement in the regular overview of the SIP, governors are well aware of the priorities for school improvement. Governors act as critical friends and challenge the head teacher and staff to look for further improvements. Concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly.

Local and national priorities are incorporated effectively into the school's programmes of work. The school has very successfully implemented the Foundation Phase and ensures that aspects of assessment for learning and moderating teacher assessment develop effectively.

**Improving quality: Good**

Through effective self-evaluation processes, senior managers, staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A broad range of evidence is collated, scrutinised and subsequently used to identify priorities. Views of all stakeholders are sought, including governors, parents and pupils.

The self-evaluation report identifies strengths and ways forward and processes have an appropriate impact on priorities in the SIP. Although priorities for improvement are clearly identified, the SIP lacks a clear focus for improvement in pupils' learning outcomes.

Issues from the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed.

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The school takes an active role in sharing practice with the LA and local schools and is currently further developing professional learning communities and networks of professional practice.

**Partnership working: Good**

Partnerships with parents, the local community, local schools and educational establishments are generally good and are used effectively to enhance learning opportunities for pupils. Nearly all parents indicated positive views about the school in their questionnaires.

The school collaborates well with other schools and this contributes markedly to its own curriculum development initiatives. Partnership working with LA agencies and local clusters of schools are productive.

Admission and induction arrangements ensure that pupils are well prepared to start school. Transition programmes with the secondary school are well established and this reflects parents and pupils' views that pupils feel happy and secure with their move to secondary school.

Outside agencies provide effective support for pupils with specific needs and improve the quality of provision for these pupils.

**Resource management: Good**

There is a good range of resources, including outdoor resources and equipment. Support staff are deployed effectively and work well alongside the teachers in the classroom to support pupils' learning.

Teachers make effective use of their planning, preparation and assessment time and arrangements for this are managed well. Staff development is planned effectively in relation to school priorities.

Spending is clearly linked to identified priorities in the SIP. The SMT and governing body have responded positively to a budget deficit for 2010-11. The school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Most of the 50 per cent of questionnaires that were returned express a good level of satisfaction with the school in general. All parents believe that pupils behave well and say that their children have settled in well and like school. Nearly all think that teaching is good, that their child is making good progress and helped to become more mature and to take on responsibility. Many feel they are well informed about their child's progress and that the school is well run. Few parents say that the school is not well-run and believe that their children are not making good progress in their work.

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

All KS2 pupils completed the pupil questionnaires and members of the inspection team spoke to a number of them during the inspection. Nearly all believe that they are doing well at school and know who to talk to if they feel worried or upset. They know what to do and who to ask if they find the work too difficult and say that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. All feel safe in school and believe that the school deals well with any bullying.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Wil Williams	Reporting Inspector
Colette Gribble	Team Inspector
Kerry Jones	Lay Inspector
Sue Edgar	Peer Inspector
Anna Stephens	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

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## Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11