

This letter is also available in Welsh.



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

St Francis R.C. Primary School
Wilson Road
Ely
CF5 4JL

28/11/2024

Dear Marie Langsdale

Interim visit: November 2024

A team of inspectors visited St Francis R.C. Primary School to consider how the school has progressed in addressing two recommendations from its most recent core inspection. Below is a summary of progress against these focus areas. Leaders should use these findings to support further improvements.

Overall, leaders and staff at the school have worked well to address the variability in the quality of teaching identified during the core inspection. They recognise the need to undertake further work to improve pupils' skills as independent learners.

Focus of visit

Ensure that leaders focus better on addressing the variability in the quality of teaching

- Overall, leaders have worked successfully with staff to reduce variability in the quality of teaching across the school. They have put in place consistent approaches to the systematic development of skills, knowledge and understanding that result in most pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders use a suitable range of monitoring processes to evaluate how well teaching complies with the school's agreed policies. Whilst this has been useful in enabling a consistent approach across the school and helped to ensure the systematic development of pupils' skills, overall, evaluation processes tend to focus too much on compliance and not enough on the impact that teaching makes on outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders use professional learning well to improve the quality of teaching. For example, staff used a visit to a nursery in England to improve the provision for pupils in Reception and Year 1. This has resulted in staff trialling an engaging approach to foundation learning in these classes. This focusses highly

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successfully on the interests of pupils and their individual next steps in learning. The school has put in place sensible plans to roll out this approach to other foundation learning classes.

- Staff have begun to reflect and share their practice across the different phases of learning through the use of joint observations. These are beginning to result in improvements in the quality of teaching and to develop an ethos of professional reflection about pedagogy amongst staff.
- In most cases, teachers plan lessons and activities that challenge pupils to achieve at an appropriate level. They ensure that pupils are clear about the purpose of lessons and what they need to do to be successful in their learning. They use assessment information and the outcome of regular pupil progress reviews to modify their provision and help plan the next steps in learning.
- Teachers ensure that lessons and activities build well on previous learning and are beginning to plan useful opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in new contexts. For example, pupils in Year 5 use their understanding of number and calculation effectively to solve a range of word problems.

Improve pupils' independent learning skills

- Leaders, teachers and support staff are gradually developing a shared understanding of the benefits of what constitutes effective independent learning for pupils at different stages of development. The school recognises a need for further work on this area.
- Staff in Reception and Year 1 have introduced a more flexible approach to building pupils' independent learning skills. These classes share their classrooms and an outdoor space to encourage pupils to make choices about the learning environments in which they play and learn.
- The staff in these classes create interesting and engaging learning experiences in all areas that offer pupils the opportunity to use and consolidate their skills in child-led play and learning. Alongside teacher-led tasks that teach pupils new skills, knowledge and understanding, pupils have the freedom to choose, explore and investigate different resources. This helps them to develop their creativity, resilience and problem-solving skills.
- School leaders are using this trial to inform their next steps in improving independence for pupils across the school.
- Professional dialogue between leaders, teachers and support staff is key to these developments and is proving effective in planning how to use and adapt the findings of the trial to influence the way forward.
- Although many lessons in other classes offer some opportunities for pupils to make choices, think independently and use their imagination, there is still a tendency for teachers to lead the learning and over-direct what and how pupils learn.

The school's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6813375>

Yours sincerely



Liz Miles
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