Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Milford Road
Newtown
Powys
SY16 2EH

Date of visit: October 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection. As a result, His 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

R1. Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of self-evaluation and school improvement activities

Since the core inspection, leaders have established a clear focus on implementing and monitoring specific actions to address the school's recommendations. They have identified where agreed changes have been made effectively and where they require consolidating. This has enabled leaders to target future actions to improve consistency in teaching across classes.

Following a period of instability after the inspection, more stable staffing has supported the school to accelerate progress. Since this time, leaders have implemented improvements with a sharper focus and monitoring activities have become increasingly evaluative. Observations of teaching and learning now focus more keenly on the impact of provision on the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. Leaders identify key next steps for improvement clearly and revisit these at an appropriate stage to monitor impact. They provide helpful feedback that supports teachers and learning support assistants to engage with, and respond constructively to, the outcomes of self-evaluation. Staff reflect thoughtfully on their practice and show a clear commitment to improvement, refining their teaching to take account of the guidance they receive.

Leaders collaborate with professional partners to gather further perspectives on the school's work, enhance their own skills and quality assure the school's processes. They prioritise and sequence improvements to manage change sustainably. Over a relatively short period of time, leaders and teachers have secured improvements in provision to provide pupils with a calm and purposeful learning environment that enables them to learn with increased focus, motivation and independence. These improvements impact positively on pupils' behaviour and attitudes and have raised expectations for what pupils should achieve. Leaders have rightly identified aspects, such as developing pupils' oracy skills, as a further priority for development.

R2. Improve attendance and punctuality

Attendance has a notable profile throughout the school and high expectations for daily attendance are clear, visible and consistent. Pupils of all ages know the importance of attending school daily and on time and are beginning to become positive advocates for this. Having taken an interest in the impact of weak attendance on learning, older pupils have investigated the impact of poor ventilation and airborne viruses on health and how that can affect school attendance. They have shared their interesting findings with staff and governors, leading to the school purchasing air filters aimed at helping to support a reduction in illnesses and absence.

There are robust processes in place to monitor and assess punctuality, daily attendance and attendance over time. Leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of the attendance of individual pupils, groups of pupils and the whole school. They use their knowledge effectively to provide beneficial support and guidance for families who have difficulties in establishing or maintaining good rates of attendance. There is a comprehensive range of approaches that both celebrate and reward improved attendance and help to address low attendance.

Overall, the school's determined, strategic approach has been successful in improving both attendance and punctuality. Whole-school attendance, including that of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs, has improved notably. Persistent absenteeism has fallen over time, and notably fewer pupils now arrive at school late.

R3. Develop an authentic and engaging curriculum that ensures the progressive development of pupils' skills and secures positive attitudes towards learning

The school has reconsidered its curriculum and has created an offer that is now, in most respects, more meaningful, interesting and engaging to pupils. Pupils now learn about the local area, community and notable historical figures more deeply, whilst also becoming familiar with relevant global issues. Staff make better use of local amenities, businesses and community members to give pupils valuable first-hand experiences that help bring their learning to life.

Learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, are well-resourced, well-planned and productive. In the younger class, staff encourage and support pupils to explore the outdoors and follow their curiosities. Staff are skilled at knowing when to intervene and when to let pupils learn freely through their play and exploration. In the older class, pupils show increasingly valuable levels of independence. They make growing use of classroom

displays and various useful resources to help them solve problems and improve their work by themselves.

The school has focussed sharply on improving the teaching and learning of writing. From a young age, pupils benefit from purposeful opportunities to develop pre-writing skills through activities that enhance their fine and gross motor development. Teachers in both classes exhibit high expectations for pupils' acquisition and use of vocabulary. This is helping pupils to make their writing more interesting, effective and wide-ranging. In the older class, there is a clear, developmental approach to the way in which pupils plan, create and improve a piece of writing. Most older pupils take pride in their written work and appreciate the feedback they receive from staff, using it well to refine their work and make solid progress over time.

Throughout the school, there is now a consistently calm and productive atmosphere that is more conducive to effective teaching and learning. Along with the improved curriculum offer, this supports nearly all pupils to develop and actively demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and school life.

R4. Improve the impact of feedback on pupil progress

Leaders and staff have developed effective approaches to monitoring pupils' progress during lessons and now provide increasingly useful feedback, both verbally and in writing. In the younger class, staff use careful observation of pupils' learning and engagement to develop a strong understanding of their individual needs and interests. They use this knowledge to adapt the environment, indoors and outdoors, effectively and to plan learning experiences that stimulate pupils appropriately and address their needs well.

Staff work alongside younger pupils frequently, modelling language and behaviours in response to what they observe and using questioning sensitively to guide and extend pupils' thinking helpfully. They provide clear instructions and focused feedback when working with small groups that supports pupils to develop their knowledge and skills progressively. Staff collaborate effectively, readily exchanging information about pupils' learning informally to strengthen their shared knowledge of pupils' needs and progress.

In the older class, teachers provide clear objectives for learning and make beneficial use of worked examples that help pupils understand what is expected of them. Teachers and pupils discuss what they need to do to be successful in their learning and what strategies and resources will help them to make progress. Older pupils generally have a good understanding of the purpose of their learning and apply themselves with growing independence. Staff talk with and question older pupils to check and extend their

thinking. They pause learning at key moments to draw attention to what pupils do well and to correct errors or address misconceptions.

Most older pupils understand the purpose of written feedback well. They respond constructively to comments and guidance that their teachers and peers provide, making necessary corrections and worthwhile improvements to their work. The sustained importance teachers place on developing, correcting and improving pupils' work ensures that most older pupils take increasing responsibility for enhancing the quality of their work and show care in how it is presented.

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