



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

A report on

**St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Havard Road
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 8SD**

Date of inspection: November 2018

by

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

About St Mary's Catholic Primary School

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is on the outskirts of Llanelli.

There are currently 194 pupils on roll between the ages of 3 and 11. There are eight single age classes in the school including a nursery class with seven part-time and four full-time pupils. The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is 11%, which is below the national average of 18%.

The school identifies around 20% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is similar to the national average of 21%. Around 46% pupils have English as an additional language and a very few pupils speak Welsh at home. A very few pupils are cared for by the local authority.

Following the long-term absence of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher at the beginning of the Summer term, 2018. The school was last inspected in May 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The acting headteacher works conscientiously and since his recent temporary appointment has established an effective senior management team. The school has an inclusive ethos where all staff know the pupils well and provide high levels of care, support and guidance.

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. They have a positive attitude towards their learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. Most pupils make good progress, often from low starting points. Many pupils with additional learning needs make purposeful progress towards their individual targets.

In the foundation phase staff develop pupils' independent skills highly successfully, and make imaginative use of role play areas and the outdoors to promote pupils' creative and problem-solving skills. However, pupils' in key stage 2 are only beginning to make decisions about how and what they learn and the challenge provided for more able pupils is inconsistent across the school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve attendance
- R2 Raise standards of Welsh oracy
- R3 Ensure more opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to make choices in relation to their learning and provide challenge for the more able
- R4 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to use the full range of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Around half the pupils start school with skills and knowledge below the level expected for their age. During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in their learning. However a few pupils, particularly the more able, do not make enough progress.

Most pupils across the school listen attentively and talk enthusiastically to visitors about their work, using a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils are articulate and speak with maturity in a range of situations, using extended vocabulary. Most of the younger pupils make good use of their knowledge of letter sounds to work out new and unfamiliar words. By Year 6, many pupils scan for and extract information quickly to support their learning, for example when presenting the advantages and disadvantages of wind turbines. They use a range of taught strategies well to interpret the meaning of text.

Across the school, most pupils develop their writing skills well for a wide range of purposes across the curriculum. A minority of pupils from the nursery class are beginning to form letters to write simple verbs when creating instructions on how to make their fruit tusk. Older foundation phase pupils demonstrate imaginative ideas that engage the reader successfully. Examples include writing ideas on how to be happy and a fact file about owls. Most pupils' writing skills continue to develop well during key stage 2. Most present their work neatly and adapt their style of writing effectively. They are beginning to draft and refine their work suitably. As a result, most pupils' written work is of good quality, as seen in their emotive letters describing the train journey as an evacuee. However, most pupils' do not write independently at length often enough.

In mathematics lessons, most pupils across the school achieve well. In the foundation phase, many develop their calculation skills effectively, and use block graphs and pictograms appropriately to record their favourite superheroes. Most pupils in Year 2 use mathematical language correctly when estimating, measuring and sorting shorter and longer objects. Most key stage 2 pupils apply their knowledge of the four rules of number successfully to solve word problems correctly. A minority of pupils are beginning to apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example, Year 3 pupils recognise the properties of shapes when studying Celtic houses and Year 6 apply their data handling skills confidently in science when measuring the impact of the surface area of a parachute on how quickly it falls. However, the majority of pupils do not apply their numeracy skills often enough across the curriculum.

Many pupils across the school are developing successful writing skills in Welsh. However, overall, most pupils' Welsh skills are weak and they lack confidence in speaking the language in less formal situations outside of Welsh lessons. Most pupils in the foundation phase use and understand a few simple words and phrases. By key stage 2, many can ask a range of questions and others' opinions, although they have difficulty answering questions independently and at any length. Their reading skills are limited.

Most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their ICT skills. In the foundation phase, many pupils use word-processing and simple paint programmes to create pictures and successfully move a programmable toy around a map with the help of an adult. They collect data and create simple graphs to present the results, for example of their favourite fairy tales. In key stage 2, many pupils search for information online competently, and use a range of skills to present information effectively. They are beginning to create databases and present their findings suitably. Many pupils in Year 6 produce multi-media presentations successfully, for example about Ireland.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes to their learning. Working relationships between nearly all pupils and staff are respectful and this helps them to feel safe and valued. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know that they can use the class worry boxes or talk to the 'worry monsters' if they are feeling anxious or upset. Most pupils are confident that adults listen to their concerns and deal with any problems quickly.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They settle in lessons quickly and persevere when undertaking a challenging activity. For example, pupils in Year 5 show resilience during an activity in ICT when trying to solve how to use a complex application correctly before asking an adult for help. Many pupils collaborate well and support one another in their learning. They are proud of their work and discuss their topics with good understanding. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase contribute successfully to their own learning. They plan activities effectively and work independently on these daily. However, most pupils in key stage 2 do not develop their independence skills as well in their lessons.

Nearly all pupils behave well and take responsibility for their own conduct. They show kindness, respect and tolerance for adults and for one another both in the classroom and outside at playtimes and lunchtimes. Most pupils interact well with different age groups across the school and the playground buddies through their positive play training to ensure that no child feels lonely during break times.

Nearly all pupils understand the need to take regular exercise through lessons and regular activities such as the daily mile initiative. The school council's initiative to set up a fruit tuck shop on the school yard has improved most pupils understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily.

The work of members of the different committees and pupil groups gives pupils a prominent voice in the school. They undertake their responsibilities enthusiastically and are having a positive effect on school life and the wellbeing of other pupils. For example, the digital leaders ensure that all pupils have a secure knowledge about how to keep themselves safe online. The eco committee actively encourage all pupils to reduce the use of plastic at lunchtimes through collecting all plastic containers. They recycle these items to create book marks and poppies, to mark the centenary of the First World War.

Nearly all pupils are caring and sensitive about the needs of others and show a good degree of empathy. Inspired by activities to compare their own lives with others less

fortunate than themselves, Year 5 and 6 pupils have created “gift aid bags” for children in Africa. Also, most pupils raised a significant amount of money and successfully raised awareness of breast cancer by attending a recent national charity race.

Many pupils and parents have responded positively to the school’s focus on improving attendance, and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, over the last three years, attendance levels have remained lower than those in similar schools. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Teachers across the school plan effectively to give pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. They are beginning to incorporate the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales suitably into their planning. They use a range of themes and learning experiences that engage pupils’ interest effectively.

The school implements the principles of the foundation phase well. Teachers in the foundation phase ensure that pupils take part in devising their own learning through ‘Co-ordinating Our Own Learning’ (COOL) days successfully. The pupils suggest interesting ideas for role play areas such as the basement of the Houses of Parliament and plan activities that are practical and multisensory. For example, they create a home for a hedgehog out of natural resources collected from the school grounds. This builds pupils’ own, first-hand experiences effectively. There are many beneficial opportunities for the pupils to use the outdoor environment for imaginative and creative play.

Opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to influence the direction of their learning is at their initial stages of planning. A few examples include Year 5 researching about who they would like to aspire to in sport and perform a role play activity using green screen to introduce themselves whilst Year 4 discover life as a child chimney sweep. The school enhances pupils’ experiences through a wide range of visits and visitors that link closely to current topics. For example, by visiting an authentic village in Pembrokeshire whilst studying the Celts and developing an understanding of sustainability as part of a geography topic in the National Botanic Gardens of Wales. The school is beginning to plan appropriately for the digital competency framework and many teachers provide an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to develop suitable ICT skills. Teachers plan mathematics lessons well. However, the planning and the provision for pupils to reinforce and develop their numeracy and ICT skills in other areas of learning is less evident.

The school provides a suitable range of activities that promote the history and culture of Wales appropriately, such as discussing the impact of the Second World War on Wales and by studying Under Milk Wood by Dylan Thomas. Many staff use the Welsh language well and planned lessons for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills are suitable. However, in general, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills independently outside of Welsh lessons.

Teachers provide clear learning objectives and purposeful opportunities to practice and embed the pupils' literacy skills across a range of topics and real-life scenarios. For example, Year 6 pupils study and perform a Shakespearian play. Nearly all staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and as a result, classrooms are calm and respectful learning environments. The school identifies pupils who need extra support well, in English and mathematics, and provides effective support and catch-up sessions. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for groups of pupils and individuals across the ability range. However, overall, adults in key stage 2 have a tendency to over-direct activities which limits opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning. They do not always provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils.

Teachers' written feedback to pupils outlines strengths and areas for development in their work. For example, teachers identify what pupils have done well and make suitable suggestions for improvement. However, not all teachers give pupils appropriate time to respond to the feedback and make improvements to their work. Nearly all teachers and learning support assistants use questioning well to encourage pupils to think about and to extend their learning. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and make suitable use of the assessments to set targets.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy community where pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem successfully. The caring, inclusive and supportive ethos permeates the school's daily life and work. Staff know the circumstances and needs of individual pupils well. They use positive behaviour strategies, which secure high standards of politeness and mutual respect across the school.

The school has suitable systems in place for tracking the progress of all pupils. Senior leaders use them well to monitor groups of pupils, such as those with additional learning needs and those who are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' needs are identified soon after they enter the nursery or reception class. Subsequently, the support in the classrooms and through a wide range of withdrawal groups is planned carefully to meet their needs. Successful programmes include targeted speech and language provision in the nursery and interventions to support pupils' wellbeing in key stage 2. Individual education plans are clear and include measurable and challenging targets. These are written and reviewed in partnership with staff, parents and where appropriate, specialist services. Many pupils make good progress towards their individual targets.

The school offers a good range of opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children best. For example, the "Hungry caterpillar" workshops for parents, give them the opportunity to develop their understanding of how to help the younger children with their literacy skills successfully. The school's social media platforms are effective in providing parents with up-to-date information about activities which they can access on a regular basis.

The staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop a thorough understanding of how to eat and drink healthily, and the importance of being active. Staff and external providers offer a wide range of regular physical activities, including after school clubs that help pupils to become fit and active.

School assemblies, personal development programmes and acts of collective worship make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils develop a sound understanding of the need for compassion, tolerance, respect and responsibility through attending the weekly prayer group and taking part in services at the local church. Visitors are invited into the school to talk with pupils about topical issues such as, Year 6 discussing the moral issues against modern-day slavery.

The school delivers a variety of successful wellbeing initiatives, such as using construction toys, tailored group activities and encouraging pupils to perform "random acts of kindness". These activities enable many pupils to improve their confidence and to overcome their social and communication difficulties. Through an annual global food event, the school celebrates the diverse cultures within the community successfully and the pupils develop a comprehensive understanding of the wider world they live in.

Pupils have valuable opportunities to prepare them to become active citizens through the work of the pupil voice groups. In these roles, pupils take responsibility for making decisions and influencing the work of the school well. For example, the aim of the newly formed 'borrow group' this term is to encourage more 'family time' by borrowing board games from the school to play at home in order to reduce 'screen time'.

Leaders have improved strategies for promoting attendance. They ensure that parents and pupils know the importance of attending school regularly and being punctual. These strategies are beginning to work as fewer pupils are late and persistent absence is falling. However, over time, there has not been enough improvement in attendance.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The recently appointed acting headteacher provides strong, purposeful and effective leadership. Together with the newly structured senior management team, he has quickly established a fresh vision for the school based on a commitment to high standards of wellbeing and pupil achievement. He shares this vision successfully with all stakeholders and has maintained a positive and professional working relationship between all staff. The senior management team structure meets the needs of the school and the changes to the curriculum well. Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves and others. All staff understand the part they play in school improvement, including the support staff who contribute successfully to improving pupils' standards, wellbeing and social skills.

The self-evaluation report gives an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development. Leaders use a wide range of first-hand evidence that provides them with an accurate picture of the school's priorities for improvement. Recent changes are beginning to impact positively on standards and the quality of provision such as raising standards in mathematics. The staff have established new strategies to teach problem solving, and as a result, the improvements in pupils' discrete numerical skills is notable.

The school's development plan has clear action plans that focus on relevant success criteria. Leaders allocate responsibilities appropriately and identify the resources needed to deliver the plan well. They keep the development plan under regular review. Improvement targets in the plan reflect regional and national priorities appropriately, such as improving pupils' literacy skills and establishing the principles of the foundation phase, which is a strength. The school is beginning to respond to the digital competence framework appropriately. However, strategies linked to improving attendance and pupils' Welsh language skills are less effective.

The school has suitable performance management arrangements to identify teaching staff development needs. Nearly all members of staff benefit from a purposeful range of professional learning activities such as developing the outdoor learning environment in the foundation phase and introducing strategies to improve the standards of reading through guided sessions. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of other identified training needs such as, developing pupils' independent skills and providing the challenge for more able pupils in key stage 2.

Staff work well with outside agencies and other schools to share and develop their professional practice. For example, a highly innovative project about Dylan Thomas with a Special Educational needs school in the community created more dynamic learning opportunities for developing literacy, ICT and thinking skills. This has enabled the pupils involved to participate in activities to foster their self-confidence, develop their expressive capacities and encourage collaborative learning.

The governing body has a secure understanding of the school's performance and areas for development based on useful information provided by the headteacher. Governors contribute well to discussions about the school's priorities for improvement. They offer constructive support to the leadership team in meetings and provide valuable professional expertise in specific areas of the school's work. They are beginning to be involved in activities linked to the self-evaluation process which has helped to make them better informed about the school. The governing body is beginning to hold the school to account regarding standards and provision. Governors provide beneficial support to the headteacher in managing the school's budget to ensure that the school addresses local and national priorities effectively.

Leaders make very effective use of the pupil development grant to improve standards of literacy and numeracy as well as providing essential support for the emotional wellbeing of more vulnerable pupils. A good range of interventions ensure that nearly all of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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