



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

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 Aided Primary School
Ael y Bryn
Brymbo
Wrexham
LL11 5DA**

Date of inspection: March 2012

by

**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:

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

St Mary's Aided Primary School is a Church in Wales Voluntary Aided primary school situated in the village of Brymbo, near Wrexham. It caters for pupils aged between three and 11 years. There are currently 150 pupils at the school, including 19 nursery pupils.

The school considers its natural catchment to be economically disadvantaged. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. Twenty-nine per cent of the school's pupils are on the additional learning needs register, which is higher than the national average. Seven per cent of the school's pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school has seven classes and a resource provision class for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

Ninety-six per cent of pupils come from homes where English is the main language and 4% of pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home. English is the main medium for teaching and learning and pupils are taught Welsh as a second language.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Mary's Aided Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,929 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Wrexham is £8,569 and the minimum is £2,903. St Mary's Aided Primary School (Brymbo) is 12th out of the 60 primary schools in Wrexham in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- most pupils make good progress;
- teaching is consistently good;
- the high quality support provided by learning support staff makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning;
- the inclusive ethos of the school and the quality of care, support and guidance impact very positively on pupils' standards, self-esteem and wellbeing;
- the school uses information very effectively to track pupils' progress and to provide appropriate support; and
- the school has taken very good account of national priorities and these have impacted well on the standards that pupils achieve.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher's high expectations challenge pupils and staff to achieve well;
- the senior management team and the whole staff have a shared vision for the future of the school;
- self-evaluation and planning for improvement are effective; and
- governors are well informed and actively involved in the school, and their role in holding the school to account is developing well.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school and the governing body need to:

- R1 improve boys' standards in literacy in key stage 2;
- R2 ensure that more able pupils achieve higher levels at the end of both key stages;
- R3 improve planning in key stage 2 to ensure that subject specific skills are progressively developed across the curriculum;
- R4 improve the provision for Cwricwlwm Cymreig; and
- R5 continue to develop and extend professional learning communities with other schools.

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

A significant minority of pupils start school with basic and social skills below the expected level for their age. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils achieve good standards. Pupils with special educational needs in the resource provision class achieve very well according to their ability. Pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes make good progress. More able pupils are not always challenged well enough and as a result do not always achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.

In lessons, most pupils make good progress and generally achieve well. Many pupils recall previous learning well and apply their skills and knowledge appropriately to new situations. Most pupils' independent learning skills are developing very well.

Many pupils develop good oral communication skills. They talk to peers and adults confidently and share their ideas appropriately.

From an early age, pupils use their phonic knowledge to sound out new words and their mark-making skills are developing well. By the end of key stage 1, many pupils use several strategies to decode words and generally read suitable texts competently. Many pupils make good progress in their written work and write extended pieces confidently.

Older pupils talk enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy. Many pupils have reading skills appropriate to their age and ability and use higher-order reading skills effectively. The progress and standard of many pupils' written work is good. Many pupils write appropriately for a range of purposes. Written work is well presented and structured.

In key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils' performance at the expected level in English, mathematics and science is good when compared with that of the family of schools. However, the percentage of pupils performing at the higher levels is lower than that of the family.

Most pupils make appropriate progress in Welsh and, by the end of Year 6, many pupils achieve good standards that are well above the average for the family of schools. They understand and use high frequency Welsh words and phrases well within familiar contexts. Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes towards Welsh and have a satisfactory understanding of their Welsh heritage.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs affects the school's performance data. Overall, when mainstream pupils' performance is considered separately, the school's results generally compare very well with those of the family and other similar schools.

In three out of the last four years in key stage 1, girls have performed better than boys in English, but the gap has narrowed over the last two years. There are no significant differences in boys' and girls' performance in mathematics and science. In key stage 2, girls have performed significantly better than boys in English, Welsh as a second language, mathematics and science over the last four years.

Pupils entitled to free school meals are making good progress in both key stages.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils are proud of their school and speak positively about the experiences provided for them. They are enthusiastic about their learning and contribute well to discussions about how and what they learn. As a result of high quality care, support and guidance, all pupils take part in all aspects of school life. They feel happy and safe in school and are confident that staff deal with any concerns quickly and fairly.

The school council is well established and makes a positive contribution to school life. Members understand the importance of their role and feel that the school listens to their views. Links with the community, such as the Brymbo Heritage Site, have helped pupils to play a role in the wider community.

Pupils work well together to solve problems and their ability to improve their own learning is good. They are very respectful of their peers and show care and concern for each other. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including the need for regular exercise.

Behaviour across the school is consistently good and pupils are courteous and polite to each other and visitors.

Attendance is good and generally compares well with that of other similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive at school on time.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a good range of learning experiences, which meet the needs of pupils well. Teachers collaborate well to effectively plan for the development of pupils' independent learning and thinking skills.

There are good opportunities for pupils to learn and develop skills through play in the Foundation Phase. Effective assessment of pupils' abilities and interests enable staff to plan activities that engage many pupils successfully. Pupils have valuable opportunities to contribute to planning and develop their own learning.

Key stage 2 pupils have access to a broad curriculum that generally meets National Curriculum requirements. However, curriculum planning is not always adapted well enough to ensure that pupils progressively develop subject specific knowledge and skills. Provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and thinking skills is good.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs on offer.

The provision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate across the school. Opportunities to develop the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are limited.

The provision for education sustainable development and global citizenship is generally good and enables pupils to develop an understanding of the role they play in society and the world.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers have good up-to-date subject knowledge. They plan effectively and use a range of approaches to engage pupils. They share learning intentions and success criteria with pupils and this provides a clear focus for lessons. All staff have high expectations of pupil behaviour.

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong, based on an ethos of respect and hard work. The high quality support provided by learning support staff makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers make effective use of resources to enhance learning.

Pupils with special and additional learning needs receive very effective support. Teachers are developing strategies to challenge more able pupils; the impact on pupil standards is not yet evident. However, this is in its early stages and has not yet had time to impact on pupils' standards.

Assessment for learning strategies are well used throughout the school and help pupils to develop well as independent learners. This is a significant strength in the school. All pupils have personal targets and are able to discuss their progress very well. Day-to-day marking and oral feedback inform pupils of what they need to do to improve their work.

The school uses a wide range of data and formative assessment information to track pupils' emotional and academic development thoroughly. This enables staff to provide effective support focused on pupils' individual and specific needs. Parents and carers are well informed about their children's achievements, wellbeing and development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school understands the needs of its pupils very well. There are effective arrangements in place to support the development of pupils' health and wellbeing. Staff make sure that all pupils are safe and respected in school. Provision for pupils' social and cultural development is effective.

The comprehensive range of learning experiences and opportunities provided by the school promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils successfully.

The support and provision for pupils with additional learning needs are good. Pupils' needs are identified quickly. The effective grouping and support systems help pupils to make good progress. Appropriate use is made of specialist agencies and support services, with the school ensuring that pupils have access to professional support when necessary. Parents are well informed of their child's progress against the targets in their individual education plan.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive, caring, orderly community where every child is valued and treated equally. There is a clear emphasis on recognising and celebrating the achievements of every child. This is a notable strength in the school.

All pupils have access to the full range of the school's provision. The plentiful supply of resources supports the learning needs of pupils effectively. Good use is made of the local community enterprise centre for physical education.

Overall, the school building and grounds are well maintained and the accommodation is used well to promote effective teaching and learning. The extensive range of colourful and informative displays throughout the school creates a very stimulating learning environment, which celebrates well the achievements of all pupils.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision that is effectively shared with everyone connected to the school. This vision is well supported by the senior leadership team and is reflected in the priorities of the school improvement plan. The headteacher's high expectations challenge pupils and staff to achieve well. All staff value his guidance and know that their efforts are appreciated and respected.

School leaders analyse a wide range of school performance data effectively. They prioritise actions and initiatives well to improve pupils' performance and emotional wellbeing. The school improvement plan is an effective document focused on pupil outcomes. The implementation of the plan is thoroughly reviewed and monitored. Regular staff and senior leadership team meetings focus well on the school's priorities.

All staff have performance management targets, which are closely linked to school improvement and national priorities. The school provides very good opportunities to develop staff expertise in areas of the curriculum. This is having a good impact on standards in the school, for example in literacy.

The governing body is well informed about the school's performance and is closely involved in self-evaluation and strategic planning. Governors visit the school regularly and challenge leaders, where appropriate, as their critical friend.

The effective teamwork that exists amongst all staff ensures that current initiatives and developments to meet local and national priorities are developing very effectively across the school. The focus on key priorities, such as assessment for learning, the Foundation Phase, literacy and also emotional wellbeing, is having a positive impact on many aspects of school life and pupils' standards.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation process is thorough and based on a wide range of evidence. School leaders evaluate pupils' performance regularly and effectively by scrutinising their books and analysing data. They observe lessons and review teachers' planning to evaluate the quality of teaching and collect the views of pupils, parents, staff, and other interested parties. This allows them to identify the school's strengths clearly and identify areas that need to improve.

There is a clear link between the school's improvement plan and the self-evaluation report. The school's improvement plan clearly identifies areas for improvement and sets out measurable targets based on pupil outcomes. All staff are aware of the school's priorities and their specific role in addressing them.

Leaders and managers support staff well by providing opportunities for continuous professional development. Staff are involved in several professional learning networks and communities within the school, which are having a good impact on literacy standards and developing pupils as independent learners. However, involvement with wider professional learning communities is in the very early stages of development.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well with a wide range of partners, contributing well to pupils' learning and wellbeing. These include parents, the church, local training colleges and the local authority's learning support services. Good opportunities are offered to parents to work with the school and attend training to gain a variety of skills and qualifications through the Key Connections group. This strengthens the link between the school and the home and has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

The school works well with other schools within the cluster to share good practice and to moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' performance in literacy and numeracy. The recent development of the cluster school council offers pupils good opportunities to co-operate and share ideas and experiences. Transition links with the local secondary school help Year 6 pupils to effectively transfer to the next phase of their learning.

Resource management: Good

Leaders manage the deployment of staff and resources well. Teachers and support staff have responsibilities that make the best use of their expertise. The school's arrangements enable teachers to use their planning, preparation and assessment time effectively.

Spending decisions relate well to the priorities set out in the school's improvement plan. The school makes effective use of its budget and any additional income to improve facilities, for example to extend resources in the Foundation Phase and to further improve standards in literacy.

Although the school building is in need of modernisation, it is well maintained and resourced and provides a very stimulating learning environment.

The school achieves good outcomes for pupils and manages its budget well. The school therefore, provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The school has a resource provision class for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. These pupils make very good progress in relation to their abilities and starting points. When analysing pupil performance in relation to local, national and family of school comparators, it is important to consider that the school's performance data contains the results of all the school's pupils. When attainment data of pupils is considered separately from the resource provision class, the school's results compare very well with family and national averages.

In key stage 1, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator and the expected level in English has been higher than the family of schools and all-Wales averages for two of the last four years. The percentages were only marginally less than the family and national averages in 2011. However, in 2011, pupils' performance in writing was substantially lower than the average for the family.

In mathematics, performance has been higher than the family of schools and national averages for two of the last four years. In science, performance has been lower than the family and national averages for three out of the last four years.

In comparison with schools with similar percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals, the 2011 results for key stage 1 placed the school in the lower 50% of schools in English and mathematics and the lowest 25% for science.

The percentage of pupils performing at the higher level (level 3) in English, mathematics and science has been lower than the family and Wales averages for four years.

Girls have performed better than boys in English for three out of the last four years although margins have reduced over the past two years. Boys have performed better than girls in mathematics and science for three out of the last four years including 2011, but only by generally small margins.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected level (level 4) in the core subject indicator has been lower than the family of schools and national averages for three of the last four years. In 2011, pupils' performance improved and was higher than the family and national averages.

The performance in English at level 4 has been lower than the family of schools average for three out of the last four years and lower than the all-Wales average for four years. The performance in oracy in key stage 2, in 2011, was higher than family and national averages, reading was lower and writing was substantially lower than the family and national averages.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance in Welsh as a second language was substantially higher than the family and national averages.

In mathematics, performance has been lower than the family of schools and national averages for three out of the last four years but improved in 2011.

In science, performance has been lower than the family of schools and all-Wales averages for three out of the last four years with 2011 being equal to the family average and one percentage point lower than the national averages.

The percentage of pupils performing at the higher level (level 5) in English and mathematics has been lower than the family and all-Wales averages for three out of the last four years with science lower than both averages for the last four years.

Girls have performed better than boys in English for the last four years although margins have reduced over the past two years. Boys have performed better than girls in mathematics and science for three out of the last four years including 2011, but only by generally small margins. In comparison with schools with similar percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results for key stage 2, in 2011, placed the school in the lower 50% of schools in English and the higher 50% in mathematics and science.

When 2011 results are considered separately from the specialist facility, the data places the school in the highest 25% of schools in mathematics, the higher 50% in science and the lower 50% for English.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10)

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-two pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. The responses are generally in line with the benchmark comparisons for learner questionnaires.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have concerns. Nearly all pupils feel that the teachers and adults in the school help them make progress; they know what to do and whom to ask if they find work hard. Nearly all pupils believe that they are doing well in school and that that they get many chances to take part in regular exercise.

Most pupils feel that the school helps them to keep healthy. Most also feel that they have enough books equipment and computers to do their work and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school.

Many pupils feel that the school deals well with any bullying and that pupils behave well at playtime and lunchtime. Many also believe that other pupils behave well and that they can get their work done in class.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stella Gruffydd	Reporting Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
James Jones	Lay Inspector
Stuart Plunkett	Peer Inspector
Marc Jones	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.