



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

**Report of visit
Level of follow-up: significant improvement**

**St Mary's V.R.C. School
Britannia Road
Bufferland
Pembroke Dock
Pembrokeshire
SA72 6PD**

Date of visit: October 2013

by

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

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The monitoring team

Richard Lloyd	Reporting Inspector
Penny Lewis	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring visit

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in November 2011.

As a result, Her 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

Recommendation 1: Raise standards of pupils' independent learning and thinking skills

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has undertaken a great deal of work implementing and improving the Foundation Phase since the last inspection. This has helped to improve the way pupils learn independently and develop their thinking skills to a large extent. In key stage 2, teachers are giving more attention to structuring lessons and organising pair and group work to develop pupils' skills as independent learners. Lesson planning focuses well on developing more activity-based approaches to learning. These approaches are beginning to bear fruit.

Most pupils in higher key stage 2 enjoy tackling more extended and challenging problem solving activities. Pupils are beginning to use assessment for learning techniques to reflect on their own learning. However, pupils are not yet able to do this in sufficient depth in all classes. Across key stage 2, there are good examples of pupils' independent, high quality research work in their learning logs. However, in the early part of key stage 2, pupils still rely too heavily on the teacher and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop or use thinking and problem solving skills.

Recommendation 2: Implement the Foundation Phase fully

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

There have been significant changes in staffing across the Foundation Phase since the last inspection. The acting headteacher has supported new staff in implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum effectively. Staff have received appropriate training to develop their expertise in delivering the principles of the Foundation Phase through their teaching. Teachers' planning is detailed and covers the full range of learning experiences within the Foundation Phase curriculum. There are many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills independently. Pupils have regular opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, for example during 'challenge time' activities.

The school has developed the indoor environment for the Foundation Phase well since the time of the last inspection. It supports Foundation Phase teaching well. Teachers and pupils use the outdoor environment purposefully to enhance learning

experiences. This has a positive impact on pupils' development of skills, knowledge and understanding.

Recommendation 3: Improve attendance

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has worked effectively to improve attendance. It records and analyses attendance rates carefully at the level of classes, individual pupils and families. The school now has clear procedures to deal effectively and promptly with all attendance issues.

There is a strong emphasis on raising pupils' awareness of the importance of attendance, for example through attendance certificates, the celebration of class attendance rates, the 'Alfie Ant' initiative and the employment of a family and pupil support officer to manage and follow up attendance issues.

The school's initiatives have had a significant impact on the overall rates of attendance. The attendance rate for the current academic year is 96%. This figure demonstrates a sustained and considerable improvement over time and builds on the success of the summer term when attendance reached 94%.

Recommendation 4: Use assessment outcomes effectively to move pupils of all abilities forward in their learning

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Teachers have recently been involved in whole-school standardisation of work in English and mathematics. As a result, staff have a better understanding of the Foundation Phase outcomes and key stage 2 level descriptors, and of the principle of 'best-fit'. Teacher assessments represent accurately what pupils can do independently. The school tracks individual pupil progress effectively and uses the information well, for example to identify pupils who need additional support or challenge in their learning. However, as yet, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to inform day-to-day planning or to identify specific improvement targets for pupils.

Teachers use assessment for learning strategies in most lessons. They regularly share the learning intentions for lessons with pupils and explain the steps to success clearly. Most teachers also create appropriate opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own learning and occasionally on the learning of others. However, in a few lessons, the language used by teachers is not sufficiently child-friendly to enable pupils to understand expectations and the time they allow for reflection on learning is too short.

Carefully planned intervention programmes result in good progress for the groups of pupils involved. In many lessons, teachers adapt work to meet pupils' prior learning appropriately, but in others the work does not match pupils' needs and abilities well enough to make sure that they can make good progress.

Teachers mark pupils' work diligently using the recently-agreed marking scheme. Written comments usually pay good attention to the learning intention for a piece of work and suggest to pupils ways in which they can improve their work. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to respond meaningfully to comments.

Recommendation 5: Address issues of underperformance in teaching robustly and directly

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The governing body have addressed effectively most issues relating to teacher underperformance identified at the time of the last inspection. Since that time, the staffing structure of the school has changed appropriately so there is now consistent leadership and a better fit in nearly all classes between the expertise and skills of staff and the pupils they teach. Senior leaders, mentoring staff and the local authority have undertaken regular observations and scrutiny of work to identify strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. They have provided good levels of support and challenge to staff. There are clear strengths in the teaching in the majority of classes and there is much less over-direction by teachers of pupils' learning than at the time of the last inspection.

The local authority and school have provided appropriate training for staff in a number of areas, such as guided reading and developing pupils' writing skills across a range of genres. Most teachers have taken on board well new ideas and initiatives, such as Foundation Phase approaches, a new phonics scheme and more competitive approaches in mathematics. These are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. At the expected level, pupil outcomes in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2 have shown significant improvement. In comparison to similar schools across Wales, performance in the Foundation Phase indicator shows a change from the lower 50% in 2011-2012 to the higher 50% in 2012-2013. Performance in the core subject indicator for key stage 2 shows a change from the lowest 25% in 2011-2012 to the highest 25% in 2012-2013. However, pupil outcomes at the higher than expected outcome in the Foundation Phase and the higher levels in key stage 2 have not as yet shown the same level of improvement and there remain important areas for improvement in the first years of key stage 2.

The quality of work of most teaching assistants is consistently good.

Recommendation 6: Link self-evaluation and school improvement planning closely to pupil outcomes

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The post inspection action plan is closely linked to pupil outcomes. It has clearly identified targets and success criteria, and it has underpinned recent improvements effectively. The school's self-evaluation processes generally identify accurately the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's priorities within its development plan relate well to the outcomes of self-evaluation and the recommendations of the last inspection. This clear focus has led to improvements in pupil outcomes at the end of 2012-2013.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.