



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 Catholic Primary School
Havard Road
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 8SD**

Date of inspection: May 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 Catholic Primary School has 214 pupils aged 3 to 11 years of age on roll. It is in a mixed residential area on the outskirts of Llanelli in Carmarthenshire. The school serves the parishes of Llanelli, Burry Port, Ammanford and Llandeilo, with the majority of pupils coming from Llanelli.

The school reports that the area it serves is neither economically advantaged nor disadvantaged, and 15% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the all-Wales average of 20%.

Just under half of the pupils have English as an additional language. Around 20% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), including two who have a statement.

The school was last inspected in October 2005. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2004.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Mary's Catholic Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,187 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Carmarthenshire is £18,947 and the minimum is £3,114. St Mary's Catholic Primary School is 95th out of the 110 primary schools in Carmarthenshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

Throughout the school, standards of wellbeing are good. Most pupils are well motivated and keen to learn, and their behaviour is very good.

At the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, pupils attain adequate standards compared with those in other schools in its family. This level of performance does not compare well with that of similar schools or with local and national averages. More able pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are judged as adequate because:

- senior leaders do not challenge staff enough to improve the quality of their teaching to raise pupils' standards of achievement;
- staff do not use data effectively to track pupils and identify areas for development;
- leaders and managers have not set clear, measurable targets for school improvement that focus on raising standards; and
- the recommendations from the last inspection have not been fully addressed.

However, senior leaders have a clear vision for the school, which results in a strong, caring ethos; and there are a good range of partnerships that benefit pupils. The recently strengthened senior management team is working well. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and has a good working knowledge of school priorities and performance data.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve the standard of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum;
- R2 challenge more able pupils effectively;
- R3 develop robust systems to monitor teaching and learning and act upon the outcomes;
- R4 set clear, prioritised targets for improvement in standards with measurable success criteria; and
- R5 improve the quality of teaching, marking and assessment to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

What happens next?

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills in line with or slightly below the expected level for their age.

Overall, performance data over the past five years shows a general decline in the levels of pupil attainment at the end of both key stages. However, data analysis shows that part of this downward trend is linked to the changes in school population over time.

Nearly all pupils throughout school listen well to members of staff and other pupils. They speak clearly and with a level of confidence matched to their stage of development. They recall prior learning well and work purposefully together in groups and in pairs.

Many pupils make good progress in reading. Foundation Phase pupils use a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words and can answer simple questions on what they have read. Many older pupils read with a good level of fluency and expression. A few are developing higher-order reading skills, such as skimming and scanning.

The written work of almost all pupils is legible and well presented. However, all pupils, in particular those who are more able, do not write independently at length across the curriculum enough.

Most pupils, except those who are more able, achieve appropriate standards in mathematics, but they do not apply their numeracy skills well enough across the curriculum.

Pupils throughout the school make appropriate progress in developing their information and communication technology skills. However, progress in higher-order skills, such as the use of databases and spreadsheets, is limited.

Nearly all of the pupils who receive additional support for reading, writing and mathematics make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in relation to their abilities.

Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has fluctuated slightly over the past five years with a significant dip in performance last year. Pupil performance in 2011, when compared with that of schools with a similar percentage of free school meals, was in the lowest 25% for English, mathematics and science at the expected level (level 2). Pupils' performance was below the average for the school's family in mathematics and well below in English and science. Performance at the higher level (level 3) has also declined over the past five years although this was above the average for the family of schools in English in 2011.

Pupil attainment in key stage 2 shows a downward trend in English and mathematics over the past five years. In 2011, pupils' performance in key stage 2 was in the lower 25% compared with that of similar schools for English, mathematics and science. Performance at the expected level (level 4) was below the average for the family of schools in the three core subjects. Although there had been improvement at the higher level (level 5) in the previous year, pupils' performance was below the family average in English and mathematics and well below in science.

While there are year-on-year variations in boys' and girls' performance, overall, boys do not achieve as well as girls in both key stages.

Most pupils respond to questions in Welsh appropriately although responses are generally brief. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of instructions and the incidental Welsh used by staff. However, very few pupils instigate conversation in Welsh and pupils do not use Welsh independently.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are well motivated, enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They engage readily in their work and show good levels of concentration during lessons. Many pupils work well in pairs and groups. They are beginning to reflect on their own learning and identify how they could improve their work. However, throughout the school, pupils are not regularly involved in planning their own learning. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good. Nearly all pupils are considerate, courteous and respectful of each other and adults.

Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They know who to go to if they have concerns and have confidence in adults to support and care for them. Most pupils are gaining a good understanding of the importance of being healthy and active. Designated pupil sports ambassadors help to promote these values effectively.

The school council and eco family take an active part in the life of the school. They feel confident that their voice is heard and that they are effectively involved in planning school improvements. They recently helped to create a 'parking promise' to improve road safety around the school. Pupils are eager to participate in extra-curricular learning activities and these have a positive impact on their wellbeing.

Attendance is slightly below the average for Wales and similar schools. Overall, rates of attendance have shown a slight improvement over the past five years and the school has good arrangements in place to improve pupil attendance.

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

The school has an appropriate curriculum, which meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, Foundation Phase and religious education.

Planned learning experiences are interesting and successfully engage pupils through a wide variety of stimulating topics. However activities do not always meet the needs of more able pupils due to an over reliance on work sheets throughout the school. This limits pupils' ability to write at length across the curriculum.

Short term lesson plans incorporate key skills appropriately, although the school does not plan systematically enough for the development of these skills from class to class as children move through the school.

The school has developed good provision to support pupils with English as an additional language and those who are Gypsies and Travellers.

There is good provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and global citizenship. The eco family promotes pupils' knowledge of sustainability and the environment successfully and most pupils have a good understanding of the need to look after the planet and each other.

Weekly Welsh assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of the cultural and historical characteristics of Wales. Teachers in the Foundation Phase promote the use of incidental Welsh effectively, although this practice is not as well developed across key stage 2.

Teaching: Adequate

In nearly all lessons there are very good working relationships between staff and pupils and teachers manage pupil behaviour well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and many plan interesting learning experiences for their pupils. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed in withdrawal support sessions.

In most lessons, teachers share learning objectives with pupils and use a range of resources effectively. Most teachers make good use of opening questioning to extend pupils' thinking. In many lessons, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers do not always manage their time effectively enough to ensure pupils have appropriate lengths of time to complete tasks and develop their independent learning skills.

The use of purposeful assessment for learning strategies is adequate. Marking is undertaken regularly with positive feedback for pupils. However, teacher comments do not often enable pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

Staff use data to identify pupils accurately who are in need of additional support in withdrawal sessions. However, they do not analyse assessment findings effectively to raise standards or monitor pupils' progress systematically as they move through the school. Annual reports to parents are comprehensive and informative.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care, support and guidance offered to pupils is effective and makes a positive contribution to their enjoyment of school and their high levels of wellbeing. The school is a well-ordered place and pupils are aware of the high standard of behaviour expected of them.

The provision for pupils' health and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good features of the school's work.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Teachers identify learning difficulties at an early stage. Clearly targeted strategies for pupils needing support have resulted in good progress in their learning, attitudes and behaviour. Effective arrangements also exist with specialist services and outside agencies to provide pupils with a high level of support and guidance.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very positive ethos which encourages all pupils to treat others fairly and with respect. This is strength of the school.

All pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity to which pupils respond well.

Attractive and motivational displays in classrooms and school communal areas support pupils' learning, but there is limited evidence of the pupils own work on these displays.

The school uses its indoor accommodation effectively and has a good range of resources to support pupils' learning. The outside areas are large and well maintained, but are not fully developed to maximise learning opportunities.

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

Senior leaders have developed a clear, shared vision, reflected in the school's mission statement. This results in a strong, caring ethos in all aspects of the school's life and work.

The recently strengthened senior management team has distributed leadership responsibilities in line with identified priorities for development from the previous inspection. Leaders are beginning to discharge their roles effectively. They have introduced good provision to improve the standards of less able pupils, those with English additional language needs and Gypsies and Travellers. However, leaders have not yet addressed effectively other aspects of underperformance, such as the lack of challenge for more able pupils.

The roles and responsibilities of other members of staff are well defined, but these are not formalised in up-to-date, mutually-agreed job descriptions. Although appropriate performance management arrangements are in place for teachers, the school has no systems to assess the performance of its many support staff.

Senior leaders meet regularly to discuss a range of appropriate whole-school issues. Weekly staff meetings also focus well on these. However, leaders do not always ensure that staff discuss and address whole-school priorities for improvement.

The governing body carries out its role conscientiously and fulfils all its statutory duties. Governors have a good knowledge of the life and work of the school, but they do not challenge the school effectively to improve its performance.

The school has worked successfully to implement the vision and principles of the Foundation Phase and has begun to address other important national priorities, such as assessment for learning.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The school's self-evaluation report is a detailed document, but it does not evaluate the impact of initiatives undertaken to raise standards. The report is not based well enough on the analysis of performance data and on regular, rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Issues identified for improvement through monitoring do not inform priorities in the school development plan enough. The programme therefore fails to bring about measurable improvements in standards.

Targets in the school development plan link closely to issues identified in the self-evaluation report. However, there are a large number of targets, which do not focus well enough on raising standards and which are not prioritised. Success criteria are not clear and this makes it difficult for senior managers to assess progress accurately. In addition, not all staff know what the school's targets for improvement are or how they can contribute towards their achievement.

In partnership with other members of its faith cluster, the school has recently become part of professional learning communities to raise standards in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. However, these initiatives are at a very early stage of development.

The school has taken forward developments in relation to the recommendations from the last inspection in 2006, but most have yet to be fully addressed.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a good partnership with parents and most parents are positive about all aspects of school life. Parents feel welcome in the school and they receive good information about day-to-day events through regular newsletters. Workshops on the Foundation Phase have successfully raised many parents' understanding of how their children learn.

There are good transition arrangements in place with the neighbouring high school. These include a joint after-school club and sharing of resources for information and communication technology and art, as well as taster mornings for pupils. These arrangements ensure that pupils are prepared well for their move to Year 7. There are joint meetings with other schools in the faith cluster to standardise and moderate pupils' work in the core subjects and in Welsh second language.

Good links with the community through a local business have improved library provision in the school. This has resulted in pupils having access to a better range of reading material and has increased their interest in reading, especially in key stage 2.

Resource management: Adequate

Leaders deploy teachers and other staff appropriately. Good use is made of most available resources for teaching and learning with spending linked carefully to targets in the school development plan. However, arrangements for the deployment of staff to cover teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time are not as efficient as they could be.

There is a range of good opportunities provided for staff training and these match current development priorities. The introduction, for example, of additional support programmes to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on the standards achieved by targeted pupils.

The adequate standards achieved by many pupils in the core subjects and in the key skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum mean that the school provides only adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Many pupils enter the school with skills in literacy and numeracy either in line or slightly below the expected level for their age group.

By the age of seven, at the end of key stage 1, most pupils have made appropriate progress. Many pupils attain the expected level (level 2) in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. However, pupil attainment at the end of key stage 1 is weaker when compared with that of schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupil attainment in 2011 in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator placed the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools.

Over the past three years, attainment at the higher level (level 3) in English and mathematics has fluctuated slightly, moving between the lowest 25% and the highest 50% of levels attained by similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupil attainment at the higher levels in science has declined over the past three years and does not compare well with that of similar schools.

The results of teacher assessment over the last three years show a general downward trend in pupil performance at the end of key stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, and in the core subject indicator at the expected level (level 4).

By the end of key stage 2, many pupils reach the expected level in English, mathematics and science. However, performance in English and mathematics has fallen from the upper 50% to the lowest 25% over the past five years when compared with that of similar schools.

Results at the higher level (level 5) in English and mathematics have fluctuated slightly from year to year between the bottom 25% and lower 50% of results for schools with similar levels of free school meals. Results at the higher level in science are weaker overall.

Performance shows that, although results were below the family of schools average, the school performs at around the level expected at the end of both key stages. In relation to the level of challenge within the family, the school performs at a level greater than expected for the higher levels in English and mathematics in both key stages.

At both key stages, girls consistently perform better than boys at the expected level in English, mathematics and science. The gender gap is greater than family, the local authority and all-Wales averages, with the exception of last year's level 4 core subject indicator.

School assessment data indicates that pupils identified with additional learning needs, or those who are accessing additional support, make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Sixty parents completed the questionnaire.

All parents:

- are satisfied with the school;
- say that their child likes school; and
- think their child is safe at school.

Nearly all parents:

- think that pupils are well behaved;
- feel that their child makes good progress;
- feel that teaching is good;
- feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems;
- think that pupils are being well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education;
- believe their child is well supported and encouraged to keep healthy; and
- consider that staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect.

Most parents:

- think that homework is appropriate;
- understand the procedures for dealing with complaints;
- believe that their child is expected to do his/her best;
- feel that are kept well informed;
- feel that their child was helped to settle in well; and
- believe that there is a good range of activities provided;

In response to most questions, parents' positive responses were at or close to the average for Wales. Their positive responses were slightly below average in relation to the range of activities and the additional support given to individual pupils.

Responses to learner questionnaires:

One hundred and three pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Overall, pupil responses to nearly all the questions were in line with or above national benchmarks.

All pupils say that the teachers and other adults in school help them to make progress.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they feel safe in school;
- they know whom to ask if they find work hard; and
- they have enough books and equipment.

Most pupils think that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- they learn to keep healthy;
- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset; and
- they have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;

Many pupils say that:

- other pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time; and
- pupils behave well and that they can get their work done.

Pupils' positive responses were slightly below the national benchmark in relation to how well they think they are doing at school and how well the school deals with any bullying.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Hurst HMI	Reporting Inspector
Rhona Edwards HMI	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Andrew Thorne	Peer Inspector
Pat Way	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.