

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**St Mary's R.C. Primary School
Old Bulwark Road
Chepstow
Monmouthshire
NP16 5JE**

School Number: 6793326

Date of Inspection: 05 November 2007

by

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St Mary's R.C. Primary was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of St Mary's R.C. Primary took place between 05/11/07 and 07/11/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephanie James undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection.

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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 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	R	Y1	Y2	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 National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. St Mary's RC Primary School is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school that is situated in the Bulwark area of Chepstow. It has a very large catchment area which includes the parish of St Mary's in Chepstow and St Paul's Caldicot. The school also serves pupils from families in the army camp at Beachley. Approximately 20 per cent of pupils leave or join the school between reception and year 6 due to the number of military families based in the area. Many pupils live outside the Chepstow area and travel to school by bus, a few of them coming from Gloucestershire. The school provides a Christian education for Roman Catholic pupils and those of other faith backgrounds. Approximately 60 per cent of pupils are Roman Catholics.
2. The school caters for pupils aged four to eleven years. Children are admitted to the reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. Many of them have previously attended playgroups or nurseries. Pupils come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and the nature of the intake of pupils fluctuates from year to year. There is a very wide spread of ability on entry to school that in some years includes a few pupils with special educational needs and a few who are very able. Overall, however, pupils are of broadly average ability compared with the national and local averages.
3. There are currently 197 pupils on roll who are taught in seven single age classes. One and a half per cent of pupils are entitled to free schools meals, which is well below the national average of 17.5 per cent and the Monmouthshire average of 10.2 per cent. Ninety-nine per cent of pupils come from English speaking homes, with the remaining one per cent of pupils having Polish as their first language. Two pupils receive support in learning English as an additional language. No pupil speaks Welsh as a first language. Eleven pupils (5.6 per cent) have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN), which is well below the national average of approximately 20 per cent. However, five pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is higher than average.
4. The school recently gained the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark for the third time. It has also achieved the bronze Healthy School Award and bronze Eco Schools Award. It achieved Investor in People status during the inspection. The school was last inspected in October 2001.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's mission statement is 'Learning for Life with Christ as our Light.' It aims to create a Christian community uniting home, school, the Catholic parish and wider community and to provide a balanced and relevant curriculum in pursuit of high academic excellence.

6. Key priorities in its current School Improvement Plan for 2007 to 2008 are to:
 - further develop effective systems of self-evaluation;
 - prepare for the introduction of the Foundation Phase in September 2008;
 - develop teaching and learning strategies through key skills in preparation for the revised curriculum in 2008;
 - introduce new strategies for teaching Religious Education;
 - further develop the school's website;
 - modernise the school building and provide adequate disability access.

Summary

7. St Mary's RC Primary School is a good and very caring school which successfully achieves its main aim to create a Christian community uniting home, school, the Catholic parish and wider community and to provide a balanced and relevant curriculum. It has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous inspection in 2001.

Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

8. In the subjects inspected, pupils' overall standards of achievement are as follows:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Subject	Key stage 1	Key stage 2
English	3	2
Science	3	3
Design technology	2	2
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Physical education	2	2

9. In the lessons observed in the subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement are as follows:

Grades for standards in lessons in subjects inspected

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
7.7%	84.6%	7.7%	0%	0%

10. Standards of achievement in lessons are well above the Welsh Assembly Government's target for 2007 that 98 per cent of standards in lessons should be at least grade 3 and that 65 per cent should be grade 2 or better.

11. Most pupils achieve the targets set for them. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress relative to their abilities. All pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
12. The overall quality of the provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Children under five make good progress in developing and applying their communication, mathematical and information technology skills in all areas of learning. Their early bilingual skills are developing well.
13. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in using the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in their work across the curriculum. Good features outweigh shortcomings in pupils' numeracy and information and technology (ICT) skills. They make good progress in using their bilingual skills.
14. In the 2007 National Curriculum assessments, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 1 was slightly below the results of other pupils in Wales. Girls performed better than boys. However, a significant number of boys with SEN depressed the numbers achieving the expected level 2. More-able pupils achieved extremely well in mathematics, but performed less well in English and science.
15. Since 2004, there has been a downward trend in key stage 1 in the number of pupils achieving level 2 in all three core subjects. In comparison with similar schools (those with zero to eight per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals), pupils' performance has been below average for the last three years. However, pupils who do not attain the expected level 2 in all three core subjects are those with specific learning difficulties and the number of these pupils has increased in recent years.
16. In the 2007 National Curriculum assessments, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 was well above average in comparison with the results of other pupils in Wales. The number of pupils attaining the expected level 4 was higher in English and science than it was in mathematics. Girls performed better than boys in all three core subjects. More-able pupils achieved extremely well in English but performed less well in mathematics and science.
17. Since 2004, trends in the overall performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 have been variable. However, pupils' results have consistently been above the national average. Their performance in English has also consistently been better than in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools (those with zero to eight per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals), their relative performance has varied due to the fluctuating numbers of pupils with SEN in each year group of pupils.
18. Pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Most pupils understand what they are doing and are aware of their targets for improvement. They make perceptive evaluations

of good features in their work and become adept at identifying points for improvement.

19. Most pupils make good progress towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. More-able pupils, however, often work below their capacity, particularly in English towards the end of key stage 1 and in science in both key stages.
20. Pupils' attitude towards their learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to concentrate is good. Their behaviour is exemplary. They display good manners and move around the school calmly and quietly.
21. Overall attendance is good but there is an increasing tendency for parents to take their children on holiday during term time. Nearly all pupils attend school punctually.
22. Pupils are effectively developing important lifelong learning skills such as problem solving and creativity and make good progress in their personal, moral and wider development. Their social development is excellent.
23. Pupils respect the range of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions to be found in society. They are extremely well prepared for participation in the community but less well for effective participation in the workplace.

The quality of education and training

24. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching is as follows:

Grades for teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6.3%	78.1%	15.6%	0%	0%

25. The quality of teaching compares well with the national picture reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in her most recent annual report. Nationally, the quality of teaching in primary schools is good or better (grade 1 and 2) in 79 per cent of lessons.
26. Teachers present interesting lessons that successfully motivate pupils. Most lessons are well structured and conducted at a good pace. There is a good level of challenge in the tasks provided for most pupils, but teachers' expectations of more-able pupils are not high enough in all subjects.
27. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and adults are very good and are characterised by mutual respect. There is a purposeful working atmosphere in all classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan effectively for lessons. Sequences of lessons build well on pupils' previous learning. A good range of different teaching strategies, grouping arrangements and resources is used.

28. Members of staff treat all pupils fairly and equally. Learning support assistants are well briefed and effectively use their good knowledge of the needs of pupils with SEN to ensure that they participate fully in lessons.
29. Planned activities for the under fives effectively meet children's individual needs. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils of all abilities frequently engage in the same, or similar, tasks which do not sufficiently stretch more-able pupils in all subjects.
30. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress and there are good examples where assessment is used well to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. However, the use of assessment to inform future planning for different abilities is not consistently effective throughout the school.
31. The overall quality of oral and written feedback to pupils is good. Written reports to parents are detailed and give a clear picture of their children's strengths and weaknesses. They include useful guidance on how parents can help their children.
32. The school provides a broad, balanced, interesting and relevant curriculum which is fully accessible to all pupils. The learning experiences provided in key stages 1 and 2 effectively meet the needs of most learners. A range of varied and stimulating experiences are provided for children under five both indoors and in the area outside the classroom.
33. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the key skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing, but teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Planning for progression in pupils' key skills is at an early stage of development.
34. Extra-curricular activities effectively broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences. The curriculum is very effectively enhanced by visits to places of educational interest and by visitors to the school. Sometimes these visitors make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning.
35. The school promotes pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Its Catholic ethos effectively permeates all aspects of pupils' spiritual and moral development.
36. Pupils' bilingual skills are promoted well and good attention is paid to the 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig', the Welsh dimension to the curriculum.
37. The pastoral care policy and arrangements that contribute to the well being of all pupils are given a very high priority. The school carefully monitors and supports pupils' personal progress. The systems for monitoring behaviour are very successful. The work of the School Council contributes very well to pupils' care, support and guidance.
38. The way the school works in partnership with parents and carers is an outstanding feature. Parents and carers make an exceptional contribution to

the learning experiences of their children and raise substantial additional funds for the school.

39. The head teacher is the fully trained and experienced child protection officer who ensures other members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Everyone who works in the school is subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check.
40. The provision for pupils with SEN is good and fulfils the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice. Individual and small group support in class caters well for pupils with specific needs.
41. The positive ethos of the school and its policies and procedures ensure equal opportunity and racial equality. There are suitable arrangements for the elimination of any form of bullying. An Action Plan to address the statutory requirements of the Disability Act has been submitted to the Local Education Authority (LEA).

Leadership and management

42. The school is well led and managed by an experienced, hardworking and caring head teacher. His leadership ensures that the school's aims, values and mission statement, 'Learning for Life with Christ as our Light,' are promoted successfully and understood and shared among all members of staff and governors. The school's Catholic ethos is strongly reflected in its day-to-day life.
43. Members of staff work together closely and support each other effectively. The head teacher is supported well by the deputy head teacher and the governing body. Goals for development are clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan and are appropriate to the needs of the school. The performance management system for the head teacher and all teaching staff is well established and has a positive impact on their performance.
44. The governing body has an extremely good understanding of its role and responsibilities and is pro-active in helping set the strategic direction of the school. This is an outstanding feature in the work of the governing body. Governors are well informed about the quality of education as a result of their regular visits to the school.
45. The head teacher carries the weight of responsibility for monitoring at first-hand the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects. All members of staff understand and are involved in the school's self-evaluation procedures.
46. The school's Self-Evaluation Report is extremely thorough and represents the consensus of views of all those involved in the self-evaluation process. The inspection team's judgements match those of the school in three of the seven key questions and the main findings and recommendations represent a close match with key areas for development identified by the school in its Self-Evaluation Report.

47. The school seeks out and takes good account of the views of pupils, staff, parents, governors and external bodies such as the LEA. The self-evaluation process effectively identifies relevant, broad areas for improvement which are incorporated into the School Improvement Plan. Action plans and the analysis of assessment data do not so effectively focus on raising standards in specific areas.
48. There are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff for the number of pupils on roll. The quality of teaching and learning is effectively maintained during class teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. Support staff are managed effectively in order to maximise pupils' learning experiences.
49. There are adequate resources of good quality to support teaching and learning in most areas. Members of staff use available resources effectively to enhance the quality of work in all subjects. There is a small non-fiction library but it does not include a wide enough range of books to cater for pupils' individual interests. Teachers use electronic 'smart boards' effectively as a teaching tool but have yet to develop their full potential as a learning tool for pupils. There is a limited supply of computers. This restricts opportunities for pupils regularly to develop and apply their skills in using them.
50. The school makes good use of the available accommodation. Classrooms, playgrounds and fields are spacious and well maintained. The recently developed outdoor area for children under five and for pupils in key stage 1 is stimulating and used extensively.
51. The head teacher and governing body ensure that major spending decisions are in line with identified priorities. Overall the school provides good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in subjects where there are shortcomings.
- R2 Plan more effectively to meet learners' individual needs, particularly those of more-able pupils.
- R3 Plan for progression in the development of pupils' key skills, particularly in their use of numeracy and information and communications technology across the curriculum.
- R4 Develop more rigorous self-evaluation procedures, including the use of assessment data as a source of information, to plan for improvement.

Note: The school has already identified recommendations 2, 3 and 4 as areas for development either in its current School Improvement Plan or in the Self-Evaluation Report produced prior to the inspection.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

52. The inspection findings match the school's self-evaluation of this key question.
53. In the subjects inspected, pupils' overall standards of achievement are as follows:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Subject	Key stage 1	Key stage 2
English	3	2
Science	3	3
Design technology	2	2
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Physical education	2	2

54. In the lessons observed in the subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement are as follows:

Grades for standards in lessons in subjects inspected

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
7.7%	84.6%	7.7%	0%	0%

55. Standards of achievement in lessons are well above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) target for 2007 that 98 per cent should be at least grade 3 and that 65 per cent should be grade 2 or better.
56. Most pupils achieve the targets set for them by the school, in consultation with the Local Education Authority (LEA), and often exceed them. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
57. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress relative to their abilities. The majority of pupils with SEN achieve the targets they are set each term. In key stages 1 and 2, more-able pupils do not achieve their full potential in all subjects.
58. The overall quality of the provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Children under five make good progress in developing and applying their communication, mathematical and information technology skills in all areas of learning. Their early bilingual skills are developing well.

59. In key stages 1 and 2, standards in pupils' key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in their work across the curriculum are good. They express their ideas confidently, listen attentively to the views of others and respond appropriately. Their understanding of their work is effectively deepened through discussion.
60. Pupils use their reading skills effectively for an increasingly wide range of purposes, including independent research using books and the Internet. They write in a good variety of forms and adapt the style of their writing appropriately to its purpose.
61. Good features outweigh shortcomings in pupils' numeracy and information and technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to use them. For example, pupils do not use their measuring skills sufficiently in design and technology tasks or their data handling skills in science. They make limited use of ICT to word process their work.
62. Pupils make good progress in developing their bilingual skills as they move through the school. For example, younger pupils respond appropriately to simple questions in Welsh. Older pupils competently discuss the weather, stating their preferences.
63. In the 2007 National Curriculum assessments, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 1 was slightly below the results of other pupils in Wales and in the Local Education Authority in 2006 (the most recent year for which national and local figures are currently available). Seventy-nine per cent of pupils attained the expected level 2 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2007 compared with 80.6 per cent in Wales in 2006.
64. In key stage 1, the number of pupils attaining level 2 or better was similar in all three core subjects. Girls performed better than boys. However, a significant number of pupils with SEN were boys, which depressed the numbers achieving level 2. The number of more-able pupils achieving the higher level 3 was well above national figures in mathematics, above in science, but below in English. Given their above average starting points on entry to school, more-able pupils under performed in English and science.
65. Since 2004, there has been a downward trend in key stage 1 in the number of pupils achieving level 2 in all three core subjects. In comparison with similar schools (those with zero to eight per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals), pupils' performance was below average and in the lowest 25 per cent in all subjects in 2006. However, the number of pupils with SEN in each year group influences the overall results from year to year. Pupils who do not attain the expected level 2 in all three core subjects are those with specific learning difficulties and the number of these pupils has increased in recent years. Furthermore, approximately 17 per cent of pupils leave or join the school between reception and the end of year 2, which also sometimes has a negative impact on overall results.

66. In the 2007 National Curriculum assessments, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 was well above average in comparison with the results of other pupils in Wales and in the LEA in 2006. Eighty-six per cent of pupils attained the expected level 4 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2007 compared with 74 per cent in Wales in 2006. The number of pupils attaining level 4 was higher in English and science than it was in mathematics. Girls performed better than boys in all three core subjects. The number of more-able pupils achieving the higher level 5 was well above national figures in English, but below in mathematics and well below in science. Given their above average starting points on entry to school, more-able pupils under-performed in mathematics and science.
67. Since 2004, trends in the number of pupils achieving level 4 in all three core subjects at the end of key stage 2 have been variable. However, pupils' results have consistently been above the national average and often above LEA averages too. In comparison with similar schools (those with zero to eight per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals) pupils' performance was above average in English and mathematics and below average in science in 2006. Pupils' performance in comparison with those in similar schools has varied due to the fluctuating numbers of pupils with SEN in each year group and the fact that approximately twenty per cent of pupils either leave or join the school between reception and the end of year 6.
68. Pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills as they move through the school. They benefit from a wide range of relevant opportunities to develop their skills in a variety of different contexts. Most pupils understand what they are doing and are aware of their targets for improvement. When given the opportunity, they make perceptive evaluations of good features in their work and become adept at identifying points for improvement.
69. Most pupils make good progress towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. More-able pupils, however, often work below their capacity, particularly in English towards the end of key stage 1 and science in both key stages.
70. Pupils' attitude towards their learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to concentrate is good. They work hard in lessons and are keen to join in the range of activities provided.
71. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They understand what is expected of them and are courteous to staff and visitors at all times. They display good manners and often take the initiative in, for example, opening doors for adults and one another. They move around the school calmly and quietly and respond extremely well to requests and directions.
72. Overall attendance is good, averaging just below 95 per cent during the previous year. However, there is an increasing tendency for parents to take their children on holiday during term time. Almost one-third of pupils took an average of over three days off for this purpose during the last summer term. Nearly all pupils attend school punctually.

73. Pupils are effectively developing good lifelong learning skills such as problem solving and creativity. For example, pupils making puppets in year 2 enjoy solving the problem of how to attach buttons securely and in history lessons they use their creative skills very well to act out scenes from Victorian life.
74. Pupils make good progress in their personal, moral and wider development. Their social development is excellent. Children under five work and play very harmoniously together. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate outstanding care, respect and support for one another and are very sensitive to their feelings and needs. They often spontaneously offer to help one another. The School Council provides good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility and to be involved in decision making.
75. Pupils' awareness of equal opportunities is developing well and they respect the range of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions to be found in society. Year 6 pupils, for example, show a good understanding of different cultural traditions in their discussions of a village in India.
76. Pupils' understanding of community life and the working world has good features that outweigh shortcomings. They are prepared extremely well for participation in the community through their very close involvement with the church and its parishioners. They are less well prepared for effective participation in the workplace.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

77. The inspection findings match the school's self-evaluation of this key question.
78. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching is as follows:

Grades for Teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6.3%	78.1%	15.6%	0%	0%

79. The quality of teaching in 84 per cent of lessons is good or better. This compares well with the national picture reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in her most recent annual report. Nationally, the quality of teaching in primary schools is good or better (grade 1 and 2) in 79 per cent of lessons.
80. Teachers present interesting lessons that successfully motivate pupils. Most lessons are well structured, conducted at a good pace and give suitable time limits for the completion of tasks. There is a good level of challenge in the tasks provided for most pupils, but teachers' expectations of more-able pupils are not high enough in all subjects. Tasks do not, consistently, stimulate them to achieve excellence.
81. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and adults are very good and are characterised by mutual respect. Pupils like their teachers and know that they are valued. Members of staff have clear expectations for pupils' behaviour which they communicate effectively to them. There is a purposeful working atmosphere in all classes.
82. Teachers have good subject knowledge and keep up-to-date with developments in their areas of expertise. Members of staff who work with the under fives have a good understanding of how young children learn. They provide a well planned mix of adult-directed and child-led activities, including good opportunities for children to learn both through play and direct experience.
83. Teachers' planning is good. Lessons have clear objectives which teachers share with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers are often skilled at starting lessons imaginatively in order to stimulate pupils' curiosity and interest. For example, in an English lesson in year 3, pupils had to hunt for clues hidden around the classroom in order to identify key elements in a story setting. Sequences of lessons build well on pupils' previous learning. Homework is used well to encourage independent learning, to extend pupils' knowledge and consolidate their understanding.

84. A good range of different teaching strategies, grouping arrangements and resources is used. These varied approaches successfully maintain pupils' interest and engagement in lessons. Good opportunities for pupils to use their creative and problem solving skills are also provided.
85. Teachers develop pupils' bilingual skills well. They ask pupils questions and encourage them to respond in Welsh. They use Welsh incidentally throughout the day, thus increasing pupils' confidence in their understanding and use of the language.
86. Teachers effectively promote equality of opportunity. They treat all pupils fairly and equally and successfully encourage boys and girls to work together. They brief learning support assistants well so that they can effectively use their good knowledge of the needs of pupils with SEN and ensure that they participate fully in lessons.
87. Members of staff working with the under fives plan effectively to meet children's individual needs. They adapt their use of language very well to match children's level of understanding.
88. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils of all abilities frequently engage in the same, or similar, tasks which do not sufficiently stretch more-able pupils in all subjects. Although in the science lessons observed during the inspection, enquiry and recording skills were being developed effectively, previous work shows that many pupils record tasks in the same way. Another example is that more-able readers sometimes feel constrained by the reading scheme because they are not given sufficient opportunities, once they are reading confidently, to choose texts themselves.
89. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress. Their assessments of pupils' achievement in English are generally accurate. Portfolios of samples of pupils' writing are used effectively to enable staff to gain a shared understanding of National Curriculum levels. The accuracy of assessment in science is less consistent. In all subjects, the process of identifying what individual pupils need to do in order to progress to the next National Curriculum level, for example, from level 2 to level 3 in key stage 1 and from level 4 to level 5 in key stage 2, is under developed.
90. There are good examples where assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning for the next steps in pupils' learning. For instance, in an English lesson in year 5, the teacher shared her assessment of the previous day's work with the pupils, drawing their attention to ways they could improve and not make the same mistake again. However, the effective use of assessment to inform future planning for different abilities is not consistent throughout the school.
91. The overall quality of feedback to pupils is good. Teachers' marking of specific pieces of work is constructive and clearly identifies points for improvement. Pupils are also given individual targets for improvement, which

they understand, and which are prominently displayed in all classes to serve as helpful reminders.

92. Parents receive reports on their children's progress orally, or in writing, three times a year. Written reports are detailed and give a clear picture of children's strengths and weaknesses. Reports include targets for the coming year and offer useful guidance on how parents can help their children achieve them.
93. The school meets statutory requirements for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' progress.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

94. The inspection findings do not match the school's self-evaluation of grade 1 for this key question. This is because the inspection team did not judge there to be sufficient outstanding features in this section to merit a grade 1.
95. The school provides a broad, balanced, interesting and relevant curriculum which is fully accessible to all pupils. The school's mission statement, 'Learning for Life with Christ as our Light', underpins all aspects of the curriculum. The learning experiences provided effectively meet the needs of most learners but do not consistently offer sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. The school has recognised this as an area for improvement in its Self-Evaluation Report.
96. Policy documents and detailed schemes of work ensure progression in pupils' learning and good coverage of National Curriculum subjects, and personal and social education. They include clear learning objectives, suggested activities and resources and support the school's practice well. The curriculum fully meets legal requirements.
97. The overall quality of the provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. A range of varied and stimulating experiences are provided for them both indoors and in the area outside the classroom.
98. Good opportunities for pupils to use the key skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing are clearly identified in medium term plans. However, teachers miss opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and ICT skills in subjects such as science and design and technology. Planning for progression in pupils' key skills is at an early stage of development.
99. Extra-curricular activities effectively broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences. The school provides a good range of after school clubs that cater well for the interests and talents of pupils. These activities include art, music, netball, football and 'Green Team' (Eco schools) clubs.

100. Pupils' learning experiences are very effectively enhanced by visits to places of educational interest and by visitors to the school. Sometimes these visitors make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. For example, the expertise of a civil engineer was used to extremely good effect in a design and technology lesson in year 4. Pupils were totally absorbed by his explanation and demonstration of how bridges work and their understanding was therefore taken to a much deeper level.
101. The school promotes pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. One of the strengths of the provision is the progress pupils make, throughout the school, in their social development. Teachers provide frequent, worthwhile opportunities for pupils to share ideas, work co-operatively and take responsibility.
102. The school's Catholic ethos effectively permeates all aspects of pupils' spiritual and moral development. It gives pupils frequent opportunities to reflect on moral issues, on happy and sad experiences in their own lives and those of other people and on those less fortunate than themselves. The school collects extensively for charity and sponsors a Ghanaian school girl.
103. The school provides a good range of experiences through curriculum subjects and educational visits that effectively develop pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. Whole school assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
104. Parents and carers of pupils in the school make an exceptional contribution to the learning experiences of their children. They help in the classroom, assist in administrative tasks and run after-school clubs. The parent teacher association raises a substantial amount each year to provide additional resources and experiences for pupils. Involvement with the parish community is also extremely beneficial for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
105. The school has strong links with the main receiving Catholic secondary school and participates fully in its cluster meetings, as well as those for other schools in the local area. These provide good opportunities to share ideas and best practice in areas such as assessment and subject delivery, as well as joint in-service training. The school welcomes trainee teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants, as well as work experience students, for the additional ideas and experiences they bring to the school.
106. There is not a formal policy for developing relationships with businesses or a link with an education business partnership. Although there are some contacts, such as with a local supermarket, the use of work-related experiences to strengthen curricular planning, teaching and learning are under developed.
107. Pupils' bilingual skills are promoted well. Commands and vocabulary are displayed prominently in all classes and used effectively. However, the prominence of the Welsh language in displays and labels in classrooms is not reflected so well in whole school areas. Good attention is paid to the

'Cwricwlwm Cymreig', the Welsh dimension to the curriculum, through programmes of study in subjects such as history and art. For example, pupils study the work of Welsh designers and artists such as Laura Ashley and Richard Wilson in art lessons.

108. The school ensures equality of access and opportunity for all learners and tackles social disadvantage and stereotyping sensitively and effectively.
109. Good attention is given to sustainable development. The school has established a 'Green Team' made up of staff and pupils and is working towards the silver Eco Schools award. Displays around the school emphasise the importance of sustainability and recycling is an integral part of school life. The school effectively promotes pupils' awareness of their responsibilities as global citizens in a good variety of ways, for example, through the geography curriculum and assemblies.
110. The provision for developing pupils' entrepreneurial skills is good. Pupils are involved in running the junior tuck shop, the design and management of stalls at school and church fetes and the sale of produce donated for Harvest Festival to raise money for charities. The School Council also has responsibility for its own budget. These initiatives effectively introduce pupils to the skills needed to support economic development.
111. The school lays good foundations for lifelong learning from an early age and maintains them throughout pupils' time at the school. It also actively supports initiatives promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Estyn and other academic bodies.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

112. The inspection findings do not match the school's self-evaluation of grade 1 for this key question. This is because the inspection team did not judge there to be sufficient outstanding features in this section to merit a grade 1.
113. The pastoral care policy is given a very high priority in the school. One hundred per cent of parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their children like school, with 72 per cent strongly agreeing with this statement. The school very carefully monitors and supports its pupils' personal progress and makes effective use of external services when necessary.
114. The way the school works in partnership with its parents and carers is an outstanding feature. In the pre-inspection survey, all respondents answered the question, 'How easy is it to approach the school with questions or problems?' positively, with 72 per cent agreeing strongly. Their opinions are encouraged and valued informally at any time and formally through biennial surveys. Another extremely good feature is the recently established Parents'

Council, open to all parents, where a wide range of issues are discussed and proposals made which are then considered by the governing body.

115. The procedures for new pupils joining the school are very effective. Open days for prospective entrants are held and parents are invited to a meeting where they meet the teachers and governors and learn about the school's arrangements. They also receive a very informative 'Welcome' booklet. New pupils also have the opportunity to visit the school during the summer term and attend a special infant assembly where they are presented with their school ties. On arrival in September, year 6 pupils present new children with personalised cards of welcome. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of the way the school helps them settle in very quickly, whether they start school at the beginning or during the school year.
116. The work of the School Council contributes very well to pupils' care, support and guidance. For example, at its suggestion, 'Friendship Stops' were introduced in the playground for pupils who are feeling lonely or unhappy.
117. The systems for monitoring behaviour are very successful, with prompt action taken to address any that is inappropriate. The system for analysing and addressing patterns of poor attendance is not so effective where the issue of parents taking their children on holiday in term time is concerned. The school regularly monitors pupils' performance and quickly brings any concerns it has to the attention of parents.
118. The school effectively promotes healthy eating and lifestyles. It has achieved the Healthy Schools Bronze Award and is on course to achieve the Silver Award by the end of this academic year. The 'active,' 'sports' and 'chill' zones at break times, supervised by year 6 pupils, and after school sports clubs linked to the Dragon Sports scheme, promote the importance of regular exercise. Pupils also learn the importance of healthy eating and good hygiene in science lessons and from health professionals who visit the school.
119. The school gives the highest priority to arrangements that contribute to the well being of all pupils. A very detailed safety audit is carried out annually. Areas of concern are identified and action taken to resolve them is prioritised according to the level of urgency. Risk assessments are carried out for all educational visits and there are appropriate arrangements for first aid.
120. The head teacher is the fully trained and experienced child protection officer who ensures other members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. There is also a governor with allocated responsibility. The system followed is in line with LEA and All Wales Child Protection Procedures and everyone who works in the school is subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check.
121. The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good and fulfils the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice. The school has adopted good procedures for the identification of pupils with SEN. These pupils receive good support from their class teachers and learning support

assistants. Individual and small group support in class caters well for pupils with specific needs.

122. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) is well informed about pupils' needs and works effectively with the designated link governor for SEN.
123. Individual education plans contain specific learning targets that correspond well to the needs of individual pupils. Members of staff keep a close eye on the progress of groups within a class and plan effectively for them. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and discussed with relevant parties. The school closely monitors the progress of pupils with SEN and there is effective co-operation with the LEA support service and the secondary schools.
124. A whole school approach promotes good behaviour very well. 'Circle Time' is used effectively throughout the school to address any behavioural issues and to give pupils a greater awareness of the impact of inappropriate behaviour. Parents cite the school's calm working atmosphere as one of the features of the school that most impressed them on their first visit to it.
125. Policies and procedures to ensure equal opportunity, racial equality and to eliminate any form of bullying are appropriate. The school provides good support for pupils with English as an additional language so that they are quickly integrated into school life. 'Circle Time' and other lessons are well planned specifically to deal with gender and stereotyping issues.
126. All pupils have access to school life, visits and sporting activities. An appropriate Action Plan to address the statutory requirements of the Disability Act has been submitted to the LEA.
127. The school recognises and respects diversity. Policies such as Race Equality, Equal Opportunities, Collective Worship and schemes of work effectively promote equality and diversity through all aspects of school life.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

128. The inspection findings do not match the school's self-evaluation of grade 1 for this key question. This is because the inspection team did not judge there to be sufficient outstanding features in this section to merit a grade 1.
129. The school is well led and managed by an experienced, hardworking and caring head teacher. His leadership ensures that the school's aims, values and mission statement, 'Learning for Life with Christ as our Light,' are promoted successfully and understood and shared among all members of staff and governors. The school's Catholic ethos is strongly reflected in its day-to-day life. Pupils and parents feel that they are valued and that their views are important.
130. The school's policies effectively promote equality for all and are reflected in its practice. Members of staff work together closely and support each other effectively. They are good role models for pupils. Support assistants are well directed to support individuals and groups so that pupils of all abilities enjoy equal access to all the opportunities provided. The head teacher is supported well by the deputy head teacher and the governing body.
131. The school gives good consideration to local and national priorities, new initiatives and local partnerships. For example, it has worked hard to promote awareness of sustainability and healthy schools issues. Its development of the outdoor areas for pupils in the reception class and in key stage 1 is anticipating well the introduction of the Foundation Phase in September 2008. Good links have been established with other schools in its local 'cluster' and with the feeder secondary school.
132. A strong partnership exists between the school, the governing body and the community. The school has recently successfully achieved recognition as an 'Investor in People.'
133. All pupils are given targets for their attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2, based on their individual capabilities, and most pupils meet them. Targets are usually appropriate and realistic, but those of more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenging. Other goals for development are clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan and are appropriate to the needs of the school.
134. The performance management system for the head teacher and all teaching staff is well established and has a positive impact on their performance. Individual targets for improvement for members of staff are set and reviewed annually. Members of staff attend personal and professional training to help them meet their targets. They meet individually with the head teacher to

review their job descriptions and to evaluate the extent to which they have achieved the previous year's targets and negotiate new individual targets for improvement. Professional development interviews have been introduced for non-teaching staff.

135. The governing body has an extremely good understanding of its role and responsibilities and is very pro-active in helping set the strategic direction of the school. For example, together with the head teacher and other members of staff, it took quick, decisive and highly effective action to remedy the problem of falling pupil numbers. This is an outstanding feature in the work of the governing body.
136. Governors regularly and effectively monitor the quality of the provision. Every governor has a link with a particular subject or area, such as special educational needs, and meets the relevant co-ordinator to discuss policy, priorities and progress.
137. Most governors visit the school regularly during the working day and thus gain a good insight into the quality of education provided. The chair of governors frequently meets the head teacher to discuss issues and progress. Overall, governors are well informed about the areas in which they take a particular interest.
138. The governing body fulfils all the legal duties placed upon it and is a good 'critical friend' to the school.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

139. The inspection findings match the school's self-evaluation of this key question.
140. The senior management team consists of the head and deputy head teacher. Budget constraints have not, until recently, enabled the school to appoint another member to the senior management team. This means that the head teacher carries the weight of responsibility for monitoring at first-hand the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects.
141. All members of staff understand and are involved in the school's self-evaluation procedures. There are clear agreed procedures for monitoring standards which are followed by means of subject monitoring sheets. Members of staff discuss all aspects of the school's performance during staff training days and agree its strengths and areas for development which are then well reflected in the Self-Evaluation Report written by the head teacher.
142. Although curriculum co-ordinators do not monitor lessons for first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning, they do carefully evaluate and advise on the development of schemes of work in consultation with class

- teachers. They identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and share their expertise with the head teacher, giving him advice about those areas that need to be the main focus when he monitors lessons.
143. As a result of his monitoring of weekly planning, the quality of lessons, pupils' work and the information he receives from subject co-ordinators, the head teacher has a good overall understanding of standards and developments in subjects and areas of learning. However, due to constraints on his time, it is difficult for him to gain the thorough, detailed knowledge of every subject that is needed to plan more effectively for improvement.
 144. The school seeks out and takes good account of the views of pupils, staff, parents, governors and external bodies such as the LEA. Pupils' views are channelled effectively through the School Council and clearly influence aspects of the provision. There are biennial surveys of parents' views of the school's performance. The recently established Parents' Council provides another valuable means of communication between parents and the school in order to help it plan effectively for improvement.
 145. Following the head teacher's monitoring of lessons, curriculum co-ordinators write action plans for 'their' subjects. Action plans effectively identify strengths, but the opportunities for development identified do not focus sufficiently on raising standards in specific aspects of subjects. The analysis of assessment data, and local and national benchmarking information, to target more precise areas for improvement in subjects is not rigorous enough. However, the self-evaluation process does effectively identify relevant, broad areas for improvement which are well supported through adequate allocation of resources.
 146. The school's Self-Evaluation Report is extremely thorough and detailed and represents the consensus of views of all those involved in the self-evaluation process. In terms of the overall grades given, the inspection team's judgements match those of the school in three of the seven key questions. Where there is a mismatch, this is due to the school's misinterpretation of the grading system, particularly the criteria for grade 1. However, the inspection team's main findings and recommendations represent a close match with key areas for development identified by the school in its Self-Evaluation Report.
 147. The school's actions have resulted in a number of measurable improvements, most notably in addressing the issue of falling rolls and thereby safeguarding the future of the school in its present form. Since the last inspection, the percentage of lessons where the quality of teaching and standards achieved by pupils are good or better has substantially increased. The school has also successfully addressed most of the key issues identified for improvement. For example, standards in design and technology have risen from unsatisfactory to good. The management of time for subjects and teaching is now effective. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 now benefit from a safe, secure outdoor area. The role of curriculum co-ordinators has been developed. The only area where there has been less progress since the last

inspection is in the recommendation to monitor standards in subjects more rigorously.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

148. The inspection findings do not match the school's self-evaluation of grade 1 for this key question. This is because the inspection team did not judge there to be sufficient outstanding features in this section to merit a grade 1.
149. There are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff for the number of pupils on roll. Suitably qualified and experienced teachers support pupils well. Teachers and support staff attend training courses which contribute effectively to developing their subject knowledge and their teaching skills. Teachers make good use of their planning, preparation and assessment time. Day-to-day administrative procedures are smooth and effective.
150. Learning support assistants and other ancillary staff make a good contribution to the quality of learning. The school also makes very good use of volunteers, such as parents, to support pupils' learning.
151. There are adequate resources of good quality to support teaching and learning. Resources are generally well matched to the needs of pupils. Members of staff use available resources effectively to enhance the quality of work in all subjects.
152. There is a small non-fiction library which pupils and staff draw on to support their study of different topics but it does not include a wide enough range of books to cater for pupils' individual interests. However, the school does supplement its resources with books borrowed from the Schools' Library Service.
153. At present there is a limited supply of computers. This restricts opportunities for pupils regularly to develop and apply their skills in using them. The school is aware of the need to increase the number of computers to assist pupils with their learning across the curriculum.
154. The school makes good use of the available accommodation. Attractive displays enhance the learning environment. The classrooms are spacious and the school makes effective use of both halls as dining areas and for physical education.
155. The fields and playgrounds are spacious and well maintained and are used well as a learning resource. The recently developed outdoor area for children under five and for pupils in key stage 1 is stimulating and used extensively. It enhances practical and physical activities and is also used well for problem solving opportunities.

156. The school generally makes economic, efficient and effective use of available resources. For example, a considerable recent investment has been the installation of electronic 'smart boards' in every classroom. Teachers use them well as a teaching tool but have yet to develop their full potential as a learning tool for pupils.
157. Workforce remodelling funding is used effectively to provide support for teachers and to reduce their administrative load. The quality of teaching and learning is effectively maintained during class teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. Support staff are managed effectively in order to maximise pupils' learning experiences.
158. The head teacher and governing body regularly monitor the use of resources. They have managed a tight budget very carefully and ensure that major spending decisions are in line with identified priorities. Overall the school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key stage 1 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

159. Pupils in both key stages listen extremely well to their teachers and respond appropriately to questions about the stories they are reading. They also make good progress in listening to one another's ideas when working in pairs or small groups. By year 6 they listen attentively to a ghost story by Charles Dickens and most pupils can select and recount the key points from what they have heard.
160. Pupils make good progress in using their speaking skills for a wide variety of purposes. In key stage 1 they express their ideas well and use a good range of vocabulary to describe characters in stories. In key stage 2 they increasingly adapt their speech according to purpose. For example, in rehearsing their parts in a play script they have written, pupils in year 5 use their voices expressively to take account of character and atmosphere. By the end of key stage 2, pupils are aware of differences in modern and nineteenth century English.
161. Most pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in developing their reading skills. They develop a good knowledge of letters and their related sounds and competently apply their knowledge to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils in year 1 demonstrate good recall of events and characters and enthusiastically join in the refrain of familiar stories. By year 2, pupils confidently read predictable texts in unison.
162. In key stage 2, pupils make good progress in using their reading skills for a wide variety of purposes both for pleasure and to retrieve information. In years 3 and 4 they show good knowledge of characters and story settings. By years 5 and 6 they understand the distinct features of different genres, such as short stories and play scripts. They use the skills of inference and deduction well to gain a deeper understanding of characters and themes and refer to the text effectively to support their opinions and evaluations. They are familiar with the work of a good number of authors.
163. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress in writing for a range of purposes and in a variety of forms. For example, pupils in year 2 write good instructions on how to make a mask and show sound understanding of the genre. They also demonstrate a good understanding of the basic elements of a story. During key stage 1, pupils show increasing independence in their spelling and apply their knowledge of letters and sounds well to spell words they want to write.

164. During key stage 2, pupils of all abilities write at increasing length and with greater complexity. For example, pupils in year 4 show a good awareness of how language can be used to persuade in their posters about evacuation during World War 2. In year 5, pupils' play scripts show a good feel for patterns of speech.
165. By year 6, pupils write interesting, well constructed stories and imaginative poems showing good use of image and simile. Many pupils have found a clear personal voice. They use a wide range of punctuation. Their spelling is generally accurate and their handwriting is legible, clear and fluent.

Shortcomings

166. In key stage 1, below average readers use a limited range of reading strategies to establish meaning and more-able pupils do not read a wide enough range of more challenging texts.
167. In key stage 1, more-able pupils do not produce enough well structured, extended pieces of writing.
168. A minority of pupils in both key stages make slow progress in developing their handwriting from a printed to a joined-up style.
169. In both key stages, pupils make limited use of ICT to plan, draft and present their poems, stories and factual writing.

Science

Key stage 1 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

170. Pupils in key stage 1 are developing appropriate scientific vocabulary and they record their observations accurately using notes and diagrams. They listen and respond well to suggestions as to how to carry out their investigations, offering sensible ideas on how to proceed. They use equipment safely and competently and make relevant observations.
171. In year 1, pupils recognise similarities and differences between themselves and other pupils through carrying out an investigation of favourite smells and by offering reasons for their preferences. They recognise and name the major external parts of the human body and have a good understanding of the need for exercise.
172. Year 2 pupils correctly identify healthy food and explain its importance, particularly with regard to caring for teeth. They know the properties of common materials used in the classroom and recognise that some of these materials are found naturally.

173. By the end of key stage 1, pupils have a good understanding of forces and friction. They know, for example, that objects can travel further across different surfaces and that objects move when a force is applied to them, such as pushes and pulls.
174. Pupils' investigative skills are well developed during key stage 2. By the end of the key stage they have a good understanding of the concept of a 'fair test'. They also have a good understanding of life processes and living things. They understand the meaning of a balanced diet and can explain which foods are required to grow healthily.
175. In year 3, more-able pupils name different bones in a skeleton. All pupils assemble a jigsaw picture of a tooth and label the parts correctly.
176. Year 4 pupils have a good understanding of the properties of some common materials and know that materials can be separated in different ways. They explain clearly why certain sieves are most appropriate for the task.
177. In years 5 and 6, pupils plan investigations sensibly and their conclusions are consistent with their results. They understand the need to repeat an activity in order to verify an investigation. They record their findings well using diagrams, notes, tables and pictures.
178. Previous work and discussions with older pupils in key stage 2 confirm that they acquire good knowledge of materials, their properties and differences, including solids, liquids and gases. Pupils show a good understanding of how pitch and loudness of sounds can be changed.

Shortcomings

179. In both key stages, pupils have limited skills in independently planning, selecting resources, conducting and recording investigations and reaching a conclusion.
180. More-able pupils in both key stages do not develop a greater depth of scientific understanding across the programmes of study. They do not build sufficiently on previous learning to further their studies.
181. In key stage 2, pupils make limited use of different graphs, including using ICT, to point out and interpret patterns or trends in their data.
182. At the end of key stage 2, more-able pupils do not record observations and measurements systematically and use a sufficient range of units and conventions to communicate data appropriately.

Design technology

Key stage 1 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

183. Pupils make good progress in the skills of designing, making and evaluating as they move through the school and make a range of original products of good quality.
184. Through their exploration of different homes such as tepees, mud huts and house boats, pupils in year 1 develop a good understanding that materials behave in different ways.
185. By year 2, pupils produce very attractive string, finger and glove puppets and test them out to see if their methods of construction and the materials chosen are fit for purpose. They make honest evaluations of different elements of the design-and-make process and clearly identify aspects that could be improved.
186. By year 3, pupils understand how different structures are stronger or weaker and apply this knowledge well in making prototypes for photo frames. They join components in a good variety of ways using card and masking tape.
187. In year 4, following a visit from a civil engineer, pupils generate excellent, imaginative ideas for materials and methods of construction they might use in making models of bridges.
188. In year 5, pupils effectively use their knowledge of electrical circuits to make torches. They make good, well labelled designs that include internal and external views of the workings of the torch, including the switch. Their evaluations provide good descriptions of the difficulties they encountered in making their torches, what they learned and what they would change if they made them again.
189. By year 6, pupils show a good awareness of how to handle tools and equipment safely. They generate a number of design ideas before choosing the best one for a money container. They practise discrete skills, such as sewing, so that they join components effectively. They have a good sense of the needs of the user and they make good comparisons between their original design and the finished product. They are creative in their choice and use of different finishes.

Shortcomings

190. Although there are no important shortcomings, pupils do not regularly indicate dimensions in their designs or measure when making their products.

History

Key stage 1 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

191. Throughout the school, pupils use artefacts, first-hand experiences, drama and visits to historical sites effectively to develop their knowledge and understanding of the past.
192. Through their study of topics such as homes and clothes, pupils in key stage 1 develop a good understanding of ways in which the past was different from the present.
193. Pupils in key stage 1 use artefacts effectively to deduce ideas about the lives of people in the past and express their understanding well through drama and role play. In year 2, for example, pupils use a good variety of hats to ask and answer questions about Victorian people and to act out aspects of their lives.
194. During key stage 2, pupils make good progress in developing their skills of historical enquiry and independent research. Through the use of timelines, they develop a good understanding of how the past can be divided into different periods of time.
195. Pupils in year 3 use a range of sources of information, including the Internet, to develop good knowledge of features of Roman towns and how they differed from modern ones. They know about some key people and events, such as Boudicca's revolt against the Romans, and are beginning to understand the reasons why such events occurred.
196. In year 4, pupils develop a good understanding of the changing function of castles in their own locality and beyond and how different parts of the castle were used.
197. By year 6, pupils devise good, relevant questions about the lives of Victorian working children. They answer these questions well with reference to a range of sources and are aware that such information can be interpreted in different ways. They demonstrate empathy with children who worked in mines and a good understanding of their conditions of work. They communicate their understanding well through discussion and written work. They also develop a good awareness of historical changes and developments, such as the growth of Victorian towns and cities, and some of the consequences of these developments.

Shortcomings

198. There are no important shortcomings.

Geography

Key stage 1 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

199. In key stage 1, pupils' geographical research skills are developing well. They describe the main features of their locality well using relevant geographical vocabulary. They express thoughtful opinions about features in the immediate locality. They competently classify man-made features such as detached and semi-detached houses, the church and garage.
200. Pupils make good use of maps and plans and basic co-ordinates and produce simple maps of the immediate area. They use digital cameras to take pictures and use them well to make pictorial maps. They effectively follow directions and estimate distances.
201. By year 2, pupils study the town and develop further appropriate vocabulary to note the natural and man-made features. Their mapping skills are developing well.
202. During key stage 2, pupils develop good geographical research skills and an increasing understanding of the characteristics of their area. They record their findings in a good variety of ways.
203. In year 4, pupils read a range of maps and aerial photographs, including interactive maps, to identify the physical features of an area and what geographical patterns can be identified such as farmland, forest and industrial areas. They show the main Welsh towns on a map and have a good knowledge of countries and continents.
204. When studying Cardiff, pupils in year 5 describe extremely well the physical and human processes that have affected the development of the city. They have an extremely good understanding of how these processes have affected the lives and activities of people living there. They describe how people can both improve and damage the environment making excellent use of appropriate geographical vocabulary. Their analysis of geographical evidence to draw conclusions is outstanding.
205. By year 6, when studying countries that are less economically developed, pupils describe and evaluate very well how the geographical characteristics of those countries affect people's way of life. They use grid co-ordinates competently to note specific locations on ordinance survey maps.

Shortcomings

206. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical education

Key stage 1 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

207. During the inspection, one dance lesson and one gymnastics lesson were observed in both key stages. Further evidence was gained from discussion with pupils and scrutiny of teachers' planning and the scheme of work.

Good features

208. In both key stages, pupils understand the importance of warming the body at the beginning of an exercise period and relaxing the body after exercise.

209. Pupils work hard in both key stages, exerting themselves physically. They listen attentively to the teachers' instructions and have a good appreciation of the need to work and handle apparatus safely. In dance lessons in both key stages, pupils listen and respond very well by changing pace and matching movements to the music.

210. In key stage 1, pupils dress appropriately and are aware of the effects of physical exercise and healthy eating on their bodies. They succeed in making effective use of the space around them whilst moving around the hall. They devise appropriate movements to represent different shapes and explain orally what they are doing.

211. By year 2, most pupils produce a good sequence of five movements individually and in pairs. They show increasing control of their ability to balance, change direction and freeze as and when required.

212. In key stage 2, pupils create increasingly complex sequences of movements very well both in dance lessons and on the apparatus in gymnastics. They work well individually and in groups. They demonstrate good control of their bodies and are able to maintain their balance consistently. By year 6, pupils demonstrate good jumping and landing techniques when using a variety of apparatus.

213. Throughout key stage 2, pupils offer constructive opinions about their own work and that of their peers. They use appropriate vocabulary when discussing their performance. They make good progress in evaluating their performance in order to improve.

Shortcomings

214. There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The school welcomes the inspection findings that "St Mary's RC Primary School is a good and very caring school" and that "it has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection in 2001".

The school is particularly pleased that the report recognises that the school achieves its main aim "to create a Christian community uniting home, school, the Catholic parish and wider community".

The school is very pleased with the findings that the overall standards of achievement in lessons are above the Welsh Assembly Government's targets and that the quality of teaching compares well with the national picture. Such findings reflect the dedication of our teaching and non-teaching staff who have worked so hard in the continual process of improving standards and moving the school forward since the last inspection. The report recognises that teachers present interesting lessons that successfully motivate pupils and that relationships between pupils and adults are very good and are "characterised by mutual respect".

The school is pleased that the report recognises the contribution of parents and the Governing Body to the success of the school and that the "Catholic ethos effectively permeates all aspects of pupils' spiritual and moral development".

The school is pleased that the inspectors found that pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills as they move through the school and that pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

The school is pleased that the report has identified many good features in the teaching of the subject areas covered by the inspection. However, the recommendation to address the shortcomings in subjects will be a priority for the school. It will make sure that this recommendation and the other three recommendations of the report will be included in the school improvement plan. The school is pleased to note that the report recognises that the school has already identified three of the four inspection recommendations through its own self-evaluation procedures.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents and governors' annual reports to parents will report on the progress the school is making in addressing the inspection recommendations.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	St Mary's R.C. Primary
School type	Primary
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Address of school	Old Bulwark Road Chepstow Monmouthshire
Postcode	NP16 5JE
Telephone number	01291 623006

Head teacher	Mr M Gorell
Date of appointment	1 September 1999
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Rev. Fr. B. English
Registered inspector	Ms. S. James
Dates of inspection	5 to 7 November 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	N/A	29	27	25	30	30	26	30	197

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	7	2	8

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	24.63
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	N/A
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	28.14
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection		
Term	Reception	Rest of School
Autumn 2006	93.1%	95.8%
Spring 2007	95.9%	95.0%
Summer 2007	93.4%	93.0%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	1.5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results of Pupils in the School (2007) and Nationally (2006) at the end of Key Stage 1

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2007			Number of pupils in Year 2				29	
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	
English:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	7	14	59	21	
		National	0.4	3.4	13.1	62.7	24	
En: reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	17	52	28	
		National	0.4	2.4	9.8	63.4	26	
En: writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	7	14	69	10	
		National	0.4	4.9	14.4	68.4	11.8	
En: speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	7	14	45	34	
		National	0.4	3.8	13.9	54.9	26.8	
Mathematics	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	14	38	45	
		National	0.3	2.0	10.4	63.9	23.2	
Science	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	14	55	28	
		National	0.3	1.6	8.6	65.5	23.9	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English by teacher assessment			
In the school (2007)	79.3	In Wales (2006)	80.6

D Pupils who are exempted or disapplied under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum

W Pupils working towards level 1

National Curriculum Assessment Results of Pupils in the School (2007) and Nationally (2006) at the end of Key Stage 2

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2007	Number of pupils in Year 6	29
Percentage of pupils at each level		

			D	N	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	52	45
		National	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.6	3.9	15.9	48.2	30.4
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	10	66	24
		National	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.5	3.2	14.4	47.5	33.4
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	79	17
		National	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.3	1.8	11.5	51.8	33.8

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and English by teacher assessment			
In the school (2007)	86.2	In Wales (2006)	74.2

- D Pupils who are excepted or disapplied under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
- N Pupils who failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils working towards level 1

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of seven inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection. The nominee from the school was the head teacher.

These inspectors visited:

- thirty-two lessons or part lessons;
- all classes and
- acts of collective worship.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff and groups of pupils during the inspection.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- sixty-one responses to a parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection and
- a wide range of pupils' past and current work.

The inspection team held post-inspection meetings with the staff and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Stephanie James Registered Inspector	Contributions to key questions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 Context Summary Recommendations Appendices
Buddug Bates Team Inspector	Contributions to key questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7
Ted Tipper Lay Inspector	Contributions to key questions 1, 3 and 4
Mike Gorell Head Teacher and Nominee from the school	Contributions to team meetings and provision of information

The contractor was:

Evenlode Education Ltd
Little Garth
St John's Close
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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the staff, governing body, parents and pupils for their courtesy and help during the inspection.