

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**St Mary's RC VA Primary School
Caedraw Road
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8HA**

School Number: 6753306

Date of Inspection: 23 October 2007

by

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St Mary's RC VA Primary School 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 RC VA Primary School took place between 23/10/07 and 25/10/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephen Dennett 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 **full** 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 Roman VA Catholic Primary School is situated in the town of Merthyr Tydfil and draws most of its pupils from the parishes of St Mary's Merthyr Tydfil and St Benedict's Merthyr Vale. Pupils come from a wide catchment area. The majority of pupils come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds and there are high levels of unemployment in the area. Twenty-one per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below average and a minority have delayed social and mathematical development. There has been a steady increase in the number of pupils from European ethnic minorities, most of whom do not speak English when they come to the school.
- 2 The school provides education for pupils aged three to eleven. Around 21% of the pupils have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN) but no pupils have statements of special educational need. Around 20% of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and 25% are from ethnic minorities. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. No pupils are 'looked after' by the local education authority (LEA). At the time of the inspection, there were 190 pupils on the school's roll including 25 children who attend the nursery for mornings only. The number on roll is much the same as when the school was last inspected in November 2001.
- 3 The school has achieved a number of awards, including Basic Skills Quality Mark 2, Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools (Silver).

The school's priorities and targets

- 4 The school's mission statement '*Growing in love and faith with Jesus*' is reflected in its educational aims and priorities. The school's main aim is to provide a Catholic education within the spirit of the Second Vatican Council's statement on Christian education, '*Gravisimus Educationis*'. This priority is backed by a range of appropriate subsidiary aims designed to meet the needs of the 'whole child'.
- 5 The school has set a number of targets for the current school year, which include:
 - raising standards in reading and spelling;
 - improving pupils' target setting in mathematics;
 - raising standards in Welsh;
 - developing the use of e-mail and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum; and
 - implementing the Foundation Phase.

Summary

- 6 This is a good school with some good features and a few shortcomings. Provision for pupils with EAL is outstanding. Pupils make good progress in nearly all subjects and clearly enjoy their education at St Mary's.

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

Subjects and areas of learning for under-fives

- 7 Standards in the six areas of learning for the under-fives are as follows:

	Nursery	Reception
Language, literacy and communication	Grade 3	Grade 3
Personal and social development	Grade 3	Grade 2
Mathematical development	Grade 2	Grade 2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Grade 3	Grade 3
Creative development	Grade 3	Grade 3
Physical development	Grade 3	Grade 2

- 8 The educational provision for the under-fives has some weaknesses, but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right. Children make insufficient progress within and between the nursery and reception classes. They do not develop sufficient independence. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the skills of speaking, listening, problem solving and creativity.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	Key Stage 1 Grades	Key Stage 2 Grades
English	2	2
Welsh second language	4	4
Mathematics	2	2
Science	2	2
Information technology	2	2
Design technology	2	2
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Art	2	2
Music	2	2
Physical education	2	2

- 9 During the time of the inspection, standards of achievement in the 43 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	59%	30%	2%	0%

- 10 Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and underlying ability. Pupils achieve the learning targets set by teachers and by themselves. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds and make good progress towards fulfilling their potential. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- 11 In 2007, the school exceeded its targets in English and science at key stage 1 and only missed the target in mathematics by 3%. At key stage 2 targets were exceeded in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils' key skills are good overall. Pupil's competence in using bilingual skills is inadequate.
- 12 A key characteristic of the school is the increasing number of pupils joining the school who do not speak English as their first language. Many of these pupils are in the very early stages of acquiring English, and inevitably, this has a negative effect on the results of assessments. In addition, the number of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties has increased and this, too, has adversely affected the school's assessment results.
- 13 In the 2007 national assessments at key stage 1 and key stage 2, standards were in the lowest 25% in comparison with schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. These year groups both contained a significant number of pupils with EAL and ALN.
- 14 Although the school's overall trend in pupils' achievement has declined since the last inspection, this is largely due to the influx of pupils with EAL. When one looks at the value added to pupils' learning as they move through the school, the trend is upward.
- 15 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. They have the opportunity for prayer and reflection in assemblies and class registration. The pupils' moral and social skills are well developed apart from in the early years. Pupils are well behaved in the school. Good behaviour, positive attitudes and relationships are particularly evident. Pupils move sensibly around the school. Attendance is below the national and LEA average. Punctuality has good features which outweigh shortcomings.

The quality of education and training

- 16 During the time of the inspection, the quality of teaching in the 43 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
12%	46%	37%	5%	0%

- 17 Lessons are often stimulating and challenging. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and a good understanding of recent educational initiatives. However, teaching is not as strong in the early years, where teaching is

sometime too formal. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are well trained and this enables them to become integrated fully into the staff team, giving good support to teachers and pupils, particularly those with EAL. Teachers generally plan effectively and have high expectations of their pupils. They use a good range of strategies and resources to stimulate and challenge pupils. Basic and key skills are taught well and relevant links are made in subjects right across the curriculum. However, insufficient use is made of incidental Welsh to develop pupils' bilingual skills.

- 18 There are outstanding systems for assessing and monitoring the progress of pupils in all subjects. Teachers use marking well to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are effectively involved in their own assessment. Reports to parents are outstanding. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment.
- 19 The curriculum provided is good and all statutory requirements are met. Equal access is provided to broad and balanced learning experiences. The school meets learners' aspirations well throughout the school. There is a wide range of clear policy documents, appropriate long term schemes and well focused medium term planning which help ensure progression and appropriate continuity. Plans identify appropriate opportunities for the development of pupils' key and basic skills. However, pupils' bilingual skills are not developed sufficiently well through the curriculum.
- 20 There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences and the school is good at promoting pupils' personal development. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The culture of Wales is promoted well.
- 21 The school has good partnerships with parents, the community and other providers. There are appropriate links with the secondary schools to which pupils proceed after they have left St Mary's.
- 22 Provision for work related education is being developed well. The school is good at tackling social disadvantage and stereotyping and ensures equal access to all its pupils. Education for sustainable development is good and the school is involved in recycling projects. Progress is being made on developing pupils' entrepreneurial skills and the school reflects national priorities for lifelong learning in its provision well.
- 23 The quality of care, support and guidance provided for pupils is good. Care arrangements are managed well and there is a good partnership with parents and outside agencies. Children settle into school quickly because of the good induction procedures. The quality of personal support is good and there is an appropriate personal and social education (PSE) programme. Punctuality and attendance are monitored effectively. Pupils are well aware of issues related to health and safety and there are good procedures for child protection.
- 24 Provision for pupils with ALN is good. There are effective systems for diagnosing individual needs and these are translated into well-constructed individual education plans (IEPs) where necessary. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCo) works well in partnership with support assistants. The school provides good support for pupils whose behaviour might impede their own learning and the learning of others.

- 25 The school's provision for equal opportunities is good. All pupils are supported well, irrespective of their individual background. Support of pupils with EAL is outstanding and enables these pupils to settle into the school well and make very good progress in their acquisition of English. The school promotes gender equality well and promotes good race relations. Effective measures have been taken to tackle bullying and to promote good behaviour. The school has made reasonable adjustment to avoid putting disabled pupils at a disadvantage. The school recognises and respects diversity well.

Leadership and management

- 26 The headteacher leads the school well. Her vision is reflected in its mission statement which expresses its commitment to developing the Catholic ethos of the school. All staff are aware of the school's aims and values and are fully committed to promoting them in their work and through personal example.
- 27 The school takes appropriate account of national priorities. The headteacher and staff analyse the school's performance data and set targets accordingly. Individual targets are also set and monitored by both staff and pupils. Performance management is conducted efficiently.
- 28 The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and staff. Governors monitor the quality of provision by making regular visits to the school. Governors also receive regular reports from the headteacher and discuss these in governors' meetings. However, the governing body is only just beginning to develop its role as 'critical friend'. The governing body meets all statutory requirements.
- 29 Systems for self-evaluation are good. Staff are well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. They regularly monitor lessons in order to make judgements about standards throughout the school. All those who provide education are involved in the self-evaluation process. The school self-evaluation report is a well-structured document which effectively identifies its strengths and areas for development. The inspection team agreed with six of the seven grades the school awarded for the key questions.
- 30 The information gathered through self-evaluation is directly used to inform strategic planning. Areas identified as being in need of improvement are included as targets in the school development plan (SDP). The school supports its priorities well through the allocation of resources. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has dealt appropriately with all outstanding key issues.
- 31 Provision for staffing, accommodation and resources is good. Economic, efficient and effective use is made of all resources. Staff are well deployed and effectively trained. Resources are well matched to the school's priorities of development and the school provides good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in Welsh second language. *
- R2 Improve the provision for the development of pupils' bilingualism and ensure progression throughout the school.
- R3 Continue to improve provision in the early years by providing additional training for staff, especially in preparation for the Foundation Phase. *
- R4 Improve attendance. *

* *These issues have been identified in the SDP*

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

- 32 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 33 During the time of the inspection, standards of achievement in the 43 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	59%	30%	2%	0%

- 34 The pupils' overall standards of achievement in the lessons observed are very similar to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) figures set out in *'The Learning Country'* which states: *'Standards of achievement are at least Grade 3 in 98% of classes we inspect and standards are either Grade 1 or Grade 2 in 65% of classes we inspect'*.
- 35 The educational provision for the under-fives has some weaknesses, but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right. Children make insufficient progress within and between the nursery and reception classes. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the skills of speaking, listening, problem solving and creativity.
- 36 Standards in the six areas of learning for the under-fives are as follows:

	Nursery	Reception
Language, literacy and communication	Grade 3	Grade 3
Personal and social development	Grade 3	Grade 2
Mathematical development	Grade 2	Grade 2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Grade 3	Grade 3
Creative development	Grade 3	Grade 3
Physical development	Grade 3	Grade 2

37 In key stages 1 and 2, standards in the subjects inspected are as follows:

Subject	Key Stage 1 Grades	Key Stage 2 Grades
English	2	2
Welsh second language	4	4
Mathematics	2	2
Science	2	2
Information technology	2	2
Design technology	2	2
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Art	2	2
Music	2	2
Physical education	2	2

- 38 Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and underlying ability. Pupils achieve the learning targets set by teachers and by themselves. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds and make good progress towards fulfilling their potential. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- 39 In 2007, the school exceeded its targets in English and science at key stage 1 and only missed the target in mathematics by 3 per cent. At key stage 2 targets were exceeded in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- 40 Pupils' key skills are good overall. Their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are good throughout the school. Their numeracy and ICT skills are also good. Pupils' personal and social skills are good. Their problem-solving and independent skills are developing well. Pupils' creative skills are good at both key stages. Pupils' ability to work with others is good.
- 41 Pupil's competence in using bilingual skills is unsatisfactory, and though they make some attempt in Welsh conversation, this is limited to upper key stage 2 pupils. They cannot read Welsh texts appropriate to their age or ability with confidence and enthusiasm.
- 42 A key characteristic of the school is the increasing number of pupils joining the school who do not speak English as their first language. Many of these pupils are in the very early stages of acquiring English, and inevitably, this has a negative effect on the results of teacher assessments. In addition, the number of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties has increased and this, too, has adversely affected the school's assessment results.
- 43 In the 2007 teacher assessments at the end of Y2, 66.7% of pupils achieved the expected level 2 in English. In mathematics, 75.0% of pupils achieved level 2 and in science 70.8%. The number of pupils who achieved level 2 in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) was 66.7%. This places the school in the bottom 25% nationally and in comparison with schools with a similar number of pupils' eligible for free school meals. This year group had 20% of pupils with EAL and 44% with ALN.

- 44 In the 2007 teacher assessments at the end of Y6, 69.9% of pupils achieved the expected level 4 in English. In mathematics and science, 60.9% of pupils achieved level 4 in mathematics and science. In the core subject indicator, 60.9% of pupils achieved level 4, which places the school in the bottom 25% nationally and in comparison with similar schools. The is group had 30% EAL and 33% with ALN.
- 45 Although the school's overall trend in pupils' achievement has declined since the last inspection, this is largely due to the influx of pupils who speak English as an additional language. When one looks at the value added to pupils' learning as they move through the school, the trend is upward. For example, the group of pupils who left the school in Y6 in July 2007 had improved their performance by 6.5% since the end of Y2, even although they were a lower attaining group overall.
- 46 Pupils enjoy coming to school and benefit from its warm, friendly ethos. Relationships with staff are very good and in some instances outstanding. Pupils have a strong feeling of belonging to a happy orderly community where learning can thrive. This is acknowledged by the majority of parents.
- 47 Pupils average attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection was 90.5% which is below the LEA and national averages. Poor attendance figures are largely attributed to parents taking children on holiday during term time and children with EAL taking extended holidays during the summer and well into the start of the Autumn term. The spring term also suffered from poor attendance rates due to an outbreak of sickness and chicken pox epidemic. The school complies with Welsh Assembly Government Guidance 3/99.
- 48 The pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. They have the opportunity for prayer and reflection in assemblies and class registration. The pupils moral and social skills are developed well apart from early years where the pupils are not encouraged to be more independent during dressing and preparing for snacks.
- 49 Pupils are well behaved in the school. Good behaviour and positive attitudes and relationships is particularly evident. They move sensibly around the school.
- 50 Most pupils are eager to learn and many respond enthusiastically to questions and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively. This enthusiasm combines with a clear understanding by most pupils of what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what they need to do in order to improve further. Good progress is made by pupils.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 51 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.

52 During the time of the inspection, the quality of teaching in the 43 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
12%	46%	37%	5%	0%

53 The quality of teaching in the lessons observed is lower than the average for Wales as noted in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's report for 2005-2006 which is that 79% of teaching is Grade 2 or better.

54 In all lessons, good relationships exist between staff and pupils and as a result pupils' behaviour is consistently good. All teachers make effective use of praise to motivate pupils and encourage them to give of their best.

55 Where teaching is outstanding, work is very well matched to pupils needs, extension activities are provided to further challenge pupils of all abilities, expectations are high, planning is very detailed and highly effective use of extended questioning extends pupils' learning. A particularly strong feature is the high quality of support given to pupils with EAL who make very good progress in lessons.

56 Where teaching is good, lesson objectives are made clear, previous knowledge is reinforced and extended and teachers and support staff interact well with pupils to support their learning. Lessons are well-planned, have a clear structure, teachers explain tasks well and ensure pupils understand what they have to do, lessons proceed at a good pace and classroom organisation is good. Other good features are the time pupils are given to think before they formulate an answer and effective lesson conclusions in which learning objectives are revisited and pupils' understanding of them is checked.

57 Where teaching has shortcomings, tasks in the early years do not present an appropriate challenge, teaching styles are not well matched to children's stage of development and children are not sufficiently actively involved in their own learning. Teaching is over-directed, learning activities are over-prescribed and extended and open-ended questioning is under-developed. These shortcomings restrict children's ability to work independently, to develop autonomy and to make choices and decisions about their learning.

58 Shortcomings in key stage 1 and key stage 2 include over-directed teaching, under-developed open and probing questioning and work which does not present sufficient challenge to pupils. Teachers do not always use a sufficiently wide and imaginative range of strategies to secure the active engagement of all pupils.

59 Overall, teachers possess a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Resources are used effectively and teachers make good use of places of interest in order to promote pupils' learning. The common requirements and key skills are generally well addressed throughout the school. Teachers do not, however, provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their bilingual skills across the curriculum. The use of incidental Welsh is inadequate and few opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills are taken.

- 60 Teachers ensure that the needs of all pupils are met regardless of gender, race or ability. This is a particularly strong feature in the provision for pupils with ALN and EAL.
- 61 Arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting (ARR) are outstanding. Baseline assessment is administered shortly after entry to the nursery and again at the end of the year, at the commencement of reception and at the end of the reception year. Data are used very well to record children's progress.
- 62 An outstanding feature is the tracking record which closely monitors pupils' progress from nursery to Y6. It is used very well to monitor regularly pupils' progress against their individual targets and information about individual pupils is very accessible. It is informed by data obtained from standardised assessments administered in reading, spelling and mathematics and is particularly well informed by teachers' own formal assessments of pupils' written work.
- 63 Arrangements for assessment of the foundation subjects are a major strength of the school. These are completed termly and pupils' work is assessed against National Curriculum (NC) criteria with a very high level of accuracy and consistency. This is as a result of teachers' highly effective use of the comprehensive and detailed portfolios of assessed work in place for every subject.
- 64 The quality of assessments ensures that pupils' targets are rigorous and they are regularly monitored to review pupils' progress. Pupils are effectively involved in planning their own assessment and set their own targets which are kept in their learning diaries and are consistently used by both teachers and pupils to check progress and set new targets. Marking provides positive and formative feedback and pupils know well what to do in order to improve their work.
- 65 The quality of pupils' reports to parents is another outstanding feature of the arrangements for ARR. Detailed and consistent information about pupils' progress against both core and foundation subjects in the NC is provided. This, together with insightful information about pupils' personal and social development and their particular abilities, demonstrates how well teachers know and understand their pupils. Parents have ample opportunities to discuss their children's progress and the school works very well with them in order to best meet the needs of pupils.

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

- 66 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 67 The school is successful in providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils which meets legal and course requirements. As a result of the interesting learning experiences provided by visits to places of interest and the range of visitors to the school, pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 enjoy

- a broad and stimulating curriculum which ensures that their needs are well met. Schemes of work have been effectively revised to ensure progression, coherence and flexibility. The curriculum builds well on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills in both key stages.
- 68 The educational provision for the under-fives has some weaknesses but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right. There has been considerable investment in the outdoor curriculum but learning outdoors is not developed to its full potential and neither is it fully integrated into daily provision.
- 69 The provision for learning experiences which broaden and enrich pupils' learning through a range of activities both in school and off-site is an outstanding feature. Teachers organise and conduct a variety of after school clubs which are accessible to pupils of all ages and differing interests to which they demonstrate a very high level of commitment and enthusiasm. These include clubs for information technology, art, sport, science, choir, reading and the environment. Pupils also enjoy and benefit from the Dragon Sports scheme and from the breakfast club. Pupils in Y6 attend two residential courses, one of which introduces outdoor pursuits and another which develops science and music. These add a valuable dimension to both their learning and their personal and social development. Provision is also enriched by the range of people who visit the school including a Welsh artist who worked with the pupils and a brass ensemble. Visits to places of interest include the local library, museums, art galleries, historical sites, theatres, shops and businesses.
- 70 There are good links with a teacher training establishment and students are accepted on placement from this and from three other colleges where they are pursuing non-vocational courses. The mentors in the school provide good support and the school benefits from these partnerships. Links with the secondary school are good and the school regularly receives pupils on work experience.
- 71 The school provides many opportunities for the development of the common requirements of the NC. These, together with the key skills, are well planned for in all subjects and their provision is well monitored in both key stages. Fewer opportunities are presented for the development of key skills for the under-fives, however, because over-prescribed and controlled provision restricts opportunities for children to develop sufficiently independence and autonomy or investigative, thinking and creative skills.
- 72 The school addresses social disadvantage in a very positive manner. Pupils are encouraged to believe that they can succeed and adults actively encourage all pupils, regardless of personal circumstances, gender, ethnic background or ability, to participate in all the school's activities. As a result, pupils demonstrate courteous behaviour and respect for one another, towards visitors and to all adults who contribute to the life of the school.
- 73 Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a well developed understanding of moral issues and apply reasoning effectively when discussing these talking thoughtfully, for example, about ways in which they can take responsibility for their world. They are well aware of the needs of those less fortunate than they and help raise considerable sums of money for numerous charities. The school encourages pupils to be

- self-disciplined and respectful. This enhances the quality of school life. Adults provide good role models and set a good example encouraging pupils to develop a positive attitude towards learning and promoting well basic human values which they consider to be essential to the development of character.
- 74 *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is promoted well through Saint David's Day celebrations, visits to the school by a Welsh harpist and a Welsh artist. Visits to places of interest such as the Museum of Welsh Life contribute to pupils' historical and geographical skills. Use of the immediate locality to enhance both pupils' learning experiences and *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is a strong feature of the school's provision. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the richness and variety of other cultures by bringing in visitors such as Brazilian musicians and dancers and students from Portugal and Poland, who enhance significantly provision for pupils with EAL.
- 75 The school does not promote learners' bilingual skills sufficiently. Learners do not develop a growing vocabulary or secure sentence patterns as they move through the school. As a result, pupils make little progress. Teachers do not make sufficient use of Welsh to develop and extend pupils' competence. The school's self-evaluation document notes this as an area for development.
- 76 The school's partnership with parents is good and the school keeps parents well informed about its life and work by sending out regular newsletters, pamphlets and holding frequent meetings with parents. During the pre-inspection consultation parents expressed satisfaction with the quality of communication with the school. Some help on a regular basis in classes and by accompanying pupils on visits. Parents and grandparents make a valuable contribution to school life by leading Dragon Sports activities. The school has an established programme to encourage family literacy which is well supported by parents.
- 77 Friends of Saint Mary's organise many activities to raise considerable sums of money for the school and help with charity events. Governors are well involved in the day to day life of the school.
- 78 The school provide effective work-related education. Pupils benefit from a range of events such as a 'Job Meaning Day', as well as benefiting from the various visits made by people from industry and business. In addition visits made by the police, fire service, nurse and others further enhance pupils' learning and understanding of work-related activities.
- 79 There are some opportunities for learners to develop their entrepreneurial skills through their participation in fundraising events as well as designing, producing and selling items for CAFOD and the Mission Club. However these experiences are limited and staff have not been on any recent placements in industry as part of their professional development.
- 80 The promotion of sustainable development and global citizenship is a good feature of the school. The school through the school council has undertaken a number of initiatives relating to recycling, waste management and energy conservation and has achieved the Eco-Schools silver award. Issues relating to sustainable development and global citizenship are well promoted through geography, religious education and PSE which enhance pupils' awareness, understanding and responsibility for their environment.

- 81 The school pays good attention to lifelong learning and community regeneration. The family learning centre and the 'language and play' courses successfully enable parents and carers to help their children with their learning and it also involves them in school life. Pupils participate in community initiatives such as litter collection and traffic calming competitions. They take part in joint community events such as carol services, and the Mayor's Inauguration and cultural celebrations.
- 82 Links between St Mary's and the receiving secondary schools are good. Effective transition arrangements are well established and provide good experiences for pupils from Y5 and Y6. There are curricular links between staff in a number of subject areas as well as regular meetings between primary heads. Induction is well planned and is effective in supporting parents and helping pupils to settle into school life quickly.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 83 The inspection team's findings do not agree with the Grade 1 given in the schools self-evaluation document as there are no significant outstanding features in the school's provision.
- 84 The school plans and manages its care and support arrangements well. When there is a need, effective use is made of the expertise of support agencies. Teaching and support staff ensure that the school's arrangements are implemented consistently and effectively.
- 85 Staff are in regular contact with parents and carers and inform them well about pupils' progress. Discussions with parents and carers during and prior to the inspection show that the school's open door policy works well. Parents and carers are kept informed of the work and life of the school by a termly diary of events and regular newsletters. A number of language, literacy and numeracy workshops are held throughout the year which supports and encourages parents to work with staff in the education of pupils.
- 86 Procedures for monitoring pupils' punctuality and attendance are appropriate. Registration is administered effectively by the class teachers and the school secretary who monitor attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. The school strives to improve attendance and punctuality with a number of initiatives such as the punctuality patrols by the educational welfare officer
- 87 There are clear procedures in place for dealing with any instances of aggressive behaviour or bullying should the need arise. Parents are contacted in instances of extreme or persistent poor behaviour and good use is made of the home/school book to support communication between parents, pupils and school. Sanctions and rewards along with celebration assemblies and 'Golden Time' all help to promote positive behaviour. The school also engages the services of the behavioural support team when the need arises.
- 88 The headteacher is the nominated child protection officer. All staff have received regular briefings on protocols and procedures as outlined in the school's policy. All staff have received current training in first aid. Training has been provided on how to respond to specific allergies. Risk assessments, incidents and accidents are all recorded appropriately. The school has

- appropriate arrangements which encourage and enable learners to be healthy. The school is a member of the network of healthy schools and has gained the Healthy Schools Award.
- 89 The provision for pupils with ALN is good. Early identification ensures purposeful support. The school policy is comprehensive and complies with statutory requirements and the framework for inclusive education. The ALN co-ordinator is efficient and works well with the whole staff, outside support agencies and the governor responsible for ALN. The relationships and support for pupils are very good.
- 90 The additional support given to different groups of pupils who require literacy enhancement is very good. The support given to pupils with EAL is an outstanding feature of this school. Pupils with ALN receive timely support which is monitored regularly and assessed. All pupils with ALN make good progress considering their individual need and circumstances.
- 91 Teachers and support staff work as a team providing continuity of support and assessment needs. This is a good feature of the school. Targets set in IEPs are stated in observable, measurable terms and can be clearly monitored and reviewed. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is sufficiently diagnostic.
- 92 Behavioural programmes are written with the support of the LEA behavioural support adviser. The programmes are monitored well.
- 93 The school has developed an IEP which is 'parent friendly' and clearly outlines how parents can support their child. Parents are fully consulted regarding their child's needs and progress at least twice a year.
- 94 There is a clear equal opportunities policy which commits the school to the inclusion of all pupils in school activities as well as providing a curriculum that is accessible to everyone, particularly pupils with EAL. This is a good feature of the way the school operates and is clearly reflected in many aspects of school life such as in assemblies, extra-curricular clubs, the schoolyard, and other social activities.
- 95 There is an appropriate race equality policy in place and operational. Any racial incidents are recorded in line with LEA legislation though these incidents are rare. Attention is paid to nurturing tolerance, good inter-relationships and respect for others within the collective worship assemblies, PSE and the general life of the school. Gender equality is ensured in the curriculum through challenging stereotyped views and both boys and girls are given opportunities to attend all extra-curricular activities.
- 96 The school is working towards its goal of ensuring there are no barriers to learning in relation to physical disability by installing ramps and converting a toilet for the use of the disabled. There are currently no disabled children at the school.
- 97 The school has an effective inclusion policy. The school recognises and respects diversity and gives full consideration to pupils' social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background. The PSE curriculum and assemblies successfully address important diversity issues.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 98 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 99 The headteacher leads the school well. She has a clear sense of purpose and direction which is effectively communicated to all staff and the governing body. Her vision is reflected in its mission statement which expresses its commitment to developing the Catholic ethos of the school. At the same time, she demonstrates great care and concern for both staff and pupils.
- 100 The school's commitment to each pupil is evident also in the aims of the school and the values it seeks to promote. These focus on the development of good attitudes, learning skills and the social and interpersonal skills which are essential if pupils are to achieve well. Parents indicated their support and appreciation of the values instilled by the school in the pre-inspection questionnaires.
- 101 All staff are aware of the school's aims and values and are fully committed to promoting them in their work and through personal example. This commitment is evident in all aspects of the life of the school. The headteacher and staff succeed in creating a caring ethos and stimulating environment which promote effective learning.
- 102 Curriculum co-ordinators provide effective leadership, monitoring standards in their subjects and clearly identifying areas for improvement. These are discussed with colleagues to ensure that they understand what is required of them in the process of raising standards. They also lead training for colleagues in areas that are a priority in the SDP.
- 103 The school takes appropriate account of national priorities. The raising of standards in Welsh is an on-going target and an action plan is in place for the implementation of the Foundation Phase.
- 104 The headteacher and staff analyse the school's performance data and set targets accordingly. Individual targets are also set and monitored by both staff and pupils. Performance management is conducted efficiently and teachers' targets reflect both the school's priorities and the professional development needs and interests of the individual. The headteacher also holds appraisal meetings with staff to review their professional development.
- 105 The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and staff. Governors monitor the quality of provision informally by making regular visits to the school. Governors are proud of the school and are committed to school improvement. They receive regular reports from the headteacher and discuss these in governors meetings. However, the governing body is only just beginning to develop its role as 'critical friend'. The governing body meets all statutory requirements.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 106 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 107 Staff are well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. They gather first-hand evidence from observing lessons, looking at books and speaking to pupils. The headteacher regularly monitors lessons in order to make judgements about standards throughout the school. The headteacher monitors and evaluates teachers' planning well and gives effective leadership to the process of school self-review.
- 108 All those who provide education are involved in the self-evaluation process. The headteacher takes very seriously the opinions of staff and governors. All staff and governors are consulted and their views sought and discussed fully. Parents are consulted through questionnaires and the school takes note of their views and responds positively. The views of the pupils on the school council are also sought and pupils contribute significantly to the evaluation process.
- 109 The school self-evaluation report is a well-structured document which effectively identifies its strengths and areas for development. The judgements of the inspection team matched those of the school in six of the seven key questions. Key question 4 was awarded a lower grade as it did not have any really outstanding features.
- 110 The governing body works with the headteacher and staff in the process of self-evaluation. Governors discuss the self-evaluation report prior to approval. The governing body is committed to self-evaluation and sees it as instrumental in bringing about improvements.
- 111 The information gathered through self-evaluation is directly used to inform strategic planning. Areas identified as being in need of improvement are included as targets in the SDP. Clear priorities and realistic but challenging targets are set to ensure improvement. All members of staff monitor progress against targets in the SDP and the headteacher reports to the governors.
- 112 The school supports its priorities well through the allocation of resources. For example, the school has increased support in the classroom and this has led to the greater progress of pupils with EAL and ALN. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has dealt appropriately with all outstanding issues.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 113 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 114 The school has a sufficient number of suitably qualified teachers to teach every area of the curriculum. They are deployed well. The provision of

support staff for pupils with EAL is an outstanding feature of this school. Other support staff provide good support and they are dedicated to improve standards at the school. Good use is made of the time for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). Workload reform and remodelling has been implemented well and PPA time is covered by specialist teachers, who make a significant positive contribution to the curriculum, especially music.

- 115 All staff benefit from effective training. Many support staff have acquired qualifications and a significant number have indicated they will follow a higher level of training in the future. All staff play an active role in planning, progress review and classroom management. Lunchtime supervisors are well trained to reinforce management strategies introduced to ensure a consistent and holistic approach throughout the day. The smooth running of the school is supported efficiently by the administrative staff and its cleanliness is maintained admirably by the caretaker.
- 116 The school has adequate resources to meet the needs of the curriculum. The provision is well used and stored centrally. Most classrooms have adequate resources in class to meet their particular needs. Teachers do not make optimum use of the designated outdoor learning areas for the under-fives which are not fully integrated into daily learning experiences.
- 117 The quality of the accommodation is good and it is used well. There are adequate classrooms, a well-equipped and stocked library and spacious hall. The ICT suite is rather small and inconveniently placed in the corridor, but used effectively. The school has spacious grounds providing good opportunities for outdoor learning.
- 118 Financial management is rigorous and the school maintains a reasonable surplus each year. The school's priorities for development are well supported through the allocation of resources. The investment in ICT equipment to support the school's target of raising standards has proved successful. The school's human, physical and financial resources are regularly reviewed and very well managed by the headteacher, staff and governing body in order to ensure that the school provides the best possible provision for the pupils. It is successful in this and provides value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Under 5s

- 119 The overall quality of the educational provision for under-fives has some weaknesses but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right. The school offers full-time places for reception and part-time places for nursery children.

Language, literacy and communication skills

Nursery – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
Reception – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 120 In the nursery, children read their names and know several initial sounds. They are beginning to engage in early mark-making while in the role play

area. Children like to join in with rhymes when encouraged to. Most respond when engaged in conversation by adults. They answer questions about themselves and their families. Children listen quite well to adults.

- 121 In reception, children generally listen well and make some progress in their speaking skills. They are beginning to read familiar words in simple texts. Children sing some rhymes confidently. They know letter sounds and blends well and hold their pens appropriately when forming letters correctly. They produce well formed letters on the interactive whiteboard. Children with EAL make satisfactory progress in their acquisition of English.

Shortcomings

- 122 In the nursery children's free mark-making with a range of implements is limited. Children do not handle books or demonstrate an interest in them. Their speaking skills are restricted and they use brief answers.
- 123 In reception, children do not engage sufficiently in mark-making before they produce formal letters and words. Children do not display a sufficient interest in books. Children do not use extended sentences sufficient in their speech nor do they enunciate clearly.

Personal and social development

Nursery – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Reception – Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 124 In the nursery, children make good progress in settling into school and developing their social skills by establishing good relationships with their peers and with adults. They respond well to daily routines. Children take turns well and are able to concentrate for growing periods on their activities. They go to the toilet, wash their hands and dry them before snack and lunch time without assistance. They register themselves in the morning by putting their names in the appropriate place.
- 125 Children in reception continue to develop good relationships with adults and other children. They tidy up well at the end of the session. Children make good progress in their ability to co-operate on activities. They wait their turn patiently and share equipment well. Children sustain concentration when working on tasks or undertaking practical activities which interest them. They go to the toilet, wash and dry their hands before meals. Children are courteous to visitors, displaying interest in what they do and talking to them confidently. They demonstrate confidence when they eat lunch in the dining hall and behave well at the table. Children with EAL settle quickly into the class.

Shortcomings

- 126 Children in the nursery are not able to do sufficient things for themselves such as dressing, hanging up their coats, putting on aprons to paint, cutting up their fruit and digging. They do not initiate ideas or try to solve problems.
- 127 Children in reception do not demonstrate sufficient independence nor do they make decisions about their learning. They do not demonstrate the ability to solve problems.

Mathematical Development

Nursery – Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings Reception – Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
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Good features

- 128 In the nursery, children are beginning to learn colours and sort objects according to shape. Some join in with number songs and rhymes and count to 10. Children have a growing understanding of the comparative language of mathematics such as 'big', 'bigger', 'short' and 'long' in the context of their activities. They can match, compare and count familiar objects up to five and show five fingers when asked. Some create simple sequences and many continue patterns accurately.
- 129 In reception, children match objects up to 10 and count objects to 20 ordering these numbers correctly. They are beginning to make simple calculations verbally in the course of their activities, for example, 'there are three of us in the hospital corner but we're allowed four so we need one more'. Children are developing good mathematical vocabulary such as 'big', 'medium' and 'small' which they use correctly. They sort clothes for teddies of these sizes accurately from a selection provided. Children know two-dimensional shapes and can sequence objects accurately. Children with EAL make good progress in the development of their mathematical skills.

Shortcomings

- 130 In both the nursery and reception, pupils have poor mathematical mark-making skills

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Nursery – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings Reception – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
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Good features

- 131 The children in the nursery are beginning to understand the concept of time through their daily routines and can describe the order of their day by sequencing its main events. They know that balloons need air to inflate them and that plants need water to grow. Children know that fruit is good for them and that sweets are not. They understand that they need food in order to grow and know that birds eat berries but that these are poisonous for people to eat. They use a mouse confidently when playing games at the computer.
- 132 In reception, children have a good concept of time and can talk about events in the recent past and things which will happen in the future within the context of their lives. They use the mouse, interactive whiteboard and certain computer programs confidently. Children know that plants need water, light and earth in order to grow. They are beginning to develop an appreciation of the importance of the environment and how they can help to look after it, for example, by not dropping litter.

Shortcomings

- 133 Children in the nursery do not know that plants need soil and light in order to grow. They do not talk about their observations or ask many questions about what they are doing. Children's investigative skills are limited.

- 134 Children in reception do not make choices about materials to use for activities. Their investigative skills are limited. They do not explore sufficiently living things and objects in the natural world.

Creative Development

Nursery – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings Reception – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
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Good features

- 135 In the nursery, children use confident brush strokes and bold colours when painting colourful pictures, for example, to create attractive pictures of owls. They use a range of tools and materials to create pictures and like to talk informally about what they are doing when they are making things. Children make attractive clay faces which they enjoy decorating with seeds and gravel. They are beginning to engage in role play in the home corner.
- 136 Children in reception enjoy painting and make colourful pictures using paint and brushes confidently. They are beginning to engage in role play in the hospital corner. They make attractive models of faces from real clay which they enjoy manipulating and decorating with tools and objects such as gravel and seeds.

Shortcomings

- 137 Children in the nursery do not engage sufficiently in music-making or dance. Their ability to create representational images and to make choices about colour and medium is not as good as it should be.
- 138 In reception, children's creative skills are restricted by the use of templates and over-prescribed activities. They do not engage sufficiently in dance or music. Role play shows insufficient progress from nursery.

Physical Development

Nursery – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings Reception – Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
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Good features

- 139 Many children in the nursery move confidently with a growing awareness of space. They generally demonstrate good gross motor skills and co-ordination when rolling, stepping over tyres and jumping. Their fine manipulative skills are developing well when they handle pencils, crayons, scissors, trowels and paintbrushes.
- 140 In reception, children's gross motor skills are developing well as they use large and small equipment with increasing confidence. They understand and enjoy the differences between jumping, dancing, hopping and skipping and engage in these with good control and co-ordination. Their fine motor skills are developing well when they use scissors and art materials. Children demonstrate good co-ordination and confidence when exploring different ways of walking along a narrow bench by, for example, tip-toeing, hopping and finding ways of moving along it without using their feet.

Shortcomings

- 141 In the nursery, children's understanding of positional vocabulary is not as good as it should be. The gross motor skills of a number of children are limited.

English

Key Stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings Key Stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
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Good features

- 142 Overall standards are above expectations at both key stages and pupils are making good progress throughout the school.
- 143 Standards in listening are good at both key stages. In key stage 1, most pupils are able to take turns and listen carefully to their teachers' instructions and the ideas of others. In key stage 2, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and show an appreciation of the contributions of their peers. Throughout the school, pupils with EAL make good progress in their acquisition of English, due to highly effective support.
- 144 Standards in speaking are good in both key stages. Pupils in key stage 1 demonstrate a growing understanding of the importance of expressing their ideas fully by beginning to apply aspects of standard spoken English correctly. They use increasingly complex language to express themselves with growing confidence.
- 145 In key stage 2, pupils discuss their activities well in groups when given the opportunity to do so. The majority of pupils demonstrate that they are able to articulate their ideas with confidence and clarity and communicate well with peers and adults.
- 146 Standards in reading are good throughout the school. Most pupils in both key stages make good progress with reading in relation to their abilities. More able pupils in key stage 1 recognise the humour in texts and read with expression when using picture books they have chosen themselves.
- 147 Pupils in key stage 2 continue to read from a structured reading scheme supplemented by books from the school library. Older and more able readers read from a broader range of texts with increasing fluency and accuracy. They read for pleasure and information and know where to find reference books in the school library. Pupils demonstrate good information retrieval skills and know well how to find specific information in reference books. Pupils are developing a preference for particular genres, naming their favourite books and authors. Some express a liking for poetry, raps and plays and all enjoy humour in texts. They read fluently and expressively, demonstrating interest in the text.
- 148 In key stage 1, pupils' writing has good features which outweigh shortcomings. Younger pupils move from 'underwriting' (copying words by writing underneath them) to writing sentences independently. The more able older pupils write sentences which are demarcated by spaces, capital letters and full stops demonstrating a basic understanding of grammar. They also use apostrophes and question marks accurately in grammar exercises.
- 149 At key stage 2, writing is good with no important shortcomings. Pupils write with increasing accuracy according to their abilities. Pupils at the lower end of the key stage complete numerous grammar exercises competently. They

write a wider range of different forms including reports and poetry and begin to develop cursive writing.

- 150 Pupils in upper key stage 2 complete numerous grammar exercises with growing accuracy. They produce a wider range of writing in different forms which are suitable for the task. This includes dialogue, diary entries, letters and re-writing stories for a different audience, namely younger children. Pupils at the end of the key stage punctuate accurately and use inverted commas correctly. Most write poetry which makes effective use of descriptive vocabulary. Pupils edit and re-draft their work, write newspaper reports in an appropriate style, biographies and autobiographies and there are some examples of good creative and extended writing. They write well across the curriculum. Many pupils demonstrate an awareness of paragraphs and use them more frequently and effectively. The writing of older pupils is generally accurate and their work is presented neatly.

Shortcomings

- 151 In neither key stage do pupils use a wide range of reading strategies.
- 152 Pupils do not produce sufficient creative writing in either key stage.

Welsh second language

Key Stage 1: Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Key Stage 2: Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

Good features

- 153 Pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons especially in upper key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Many pupils display considerable enjoyment when learning, in particular when they are using the interactive whiteboard.
- 154 Pupils in key stage 1 have some reasonable understanding of Welsh labels. Many pupils are eager to share their knowledge of Welsh, in particular those with EAL.
- 155 Pupils are starting to develop their use of incidental Welsh which is encouraged in the school. The use of a 'Language Ticket' works successfully especially in key stage 1.
- 156 Pupils in lower key stage 2, use the interactive whiteboard with confidence to develop reading. They identify simple commands well and reply to questions that use predictable patterns. The '*Helpwr y Dydd*' and the enthusiasm of many teachers help pupils repeat set phrases in order to develop accurate oral responses.
- 157 Older pupils understand a limited variety of familiar phrases and some reply appropriately in short phrases or simple words. They are able to greet one another in Welsh and all answer the register in Welsh. Pupils' writing skills demonstrate development from single word answers to copying sentences.

Shortcomings

- 158 Standards are below expectations throughout the school and pupils make unsatisfactory progress at both key stages.
- 159 Pupils' confidence and progress in the use of incidental Welsh is restricted.

- 160 Pupils in key stage 1 are reluctant to speak Welsh outside the confines of the classroom because they have limited vocabulary recall.
- 161 Older pupils in key stage 2 have insufficient knowledge of Welsh vocabulary to extend their conversation.
- 162 Pupils' ability to write and read in Welsh is limited.

Mathematics

Key Stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 163 In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and underlying capabilities. They achieve standards that are above expectations by the end of Y2. Pupils with EAL make similar progress to other pupils.
- 164 Pupils have good problem-solving skills, and organise themselves and their work well. They use the correct mathematical symbols when recoding their work, as well as using appropriate diagrams when necessary. Pupils apply their problem-solving skills well when working out which numbers are odd and which are even. They use a number of different approaches and explain their reasoning well.
- 165 Pupils reliably count sets of objects, and have an appropriate mental recall of addition and subtraction facts up to 10. More able pupils have a good grasp of place value up to 1,000. They choose the appropriate operations when solving addition and subtraction problems. Most pupils know their number bonds up to 20 well and have learned multiplication tables up to five.
- 166 Nearly all pupils know the properties of common two- and three-dimensional shapes. They recognise faces, edges and points and use the correct mathematical language to describe each shape. Pupils make appropriate use of both non-standard and standard metric measurements to find out the length and capacity of a range of objects. They use tally charts effectively to produce simple graphs.
- 167 At key stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and underlying capabilities. They achieve standards that are above expectations by the end of Y6.
- 168 Pupils continue to develop good problem-solving skills. They use a range of different strategies to solve problems, for example, when working with 'missing numbers' and use a number of different approaches to solve equations.
- 169 Younger pupils in key stage 2 have a good mental recall of multiplication tables up to five. Pupils correctly identify which coins make up a given amount and make suitable use of decimal notation to record their answers. They also accurately identify and classify two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils use an appropriate range of metric measurements and know the common imperial units still in use.

- 170 Older pupils in key stage 2 try different ways of solving problems. They organise their work effectively and check it for accuracy. Pupils make appropriate use of mathematical symbols and diagrams to record their findings. Pupils use their skills well when working out the ratio of the circumference of the head to a person's height, for example.
- 171 Pupils double numbers up to 1,000,000 and use appropriate mental strategies when solving problems involving large numbers. More able pupils find the area of regular quadrilaterals using multiplication, using the formula $A=LB$ and calculate the object's perimeter.
- 172 Pupils use tables to record their findings from surveys, and construct block and line graphs, making good use of computers to display their results. More able pupils in Y6 have a good grasp of equivalent fractions, and find the lowest common factor when reducing fractions to their lowest terms. They know that 0.5 is also one half or 50%. Pupils present their work well, and this aids them in ensuring their answers are accurate.

Shortcomings

- 173 There are no important shortcomings.

Science

Key Stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings Key Stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
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Good features

- 174 Pupils make good progress and achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and underlying abilities at both key stages. Pupils with EAL make good progress.
- 175 Pupils in key stage 1 have a good understanding of the senses. Through their investigations, they have a good understanding of which stimuli effect which senses.
- 176 Pupils have a good knowledge of materials and their properties. They talk about a range of materials and sort them according to a number of criteria. They describe resin from a tree, for example and talk about how it is like glue. Older pupils in key stage 1 are beginning to develop an appropriate grasp of fair testing.
- 177 Pupils in Y3 and Y4 have a good grasp of food and healthy living. They put forward their own ideas about healthy foods and what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils understand the correct terms for various food categories, such as carbohydrates and starch. They refer to dairy products and proteins when they talk about the diets they are creating. Pupils produce good scientific reasons for the changes in the human body.
- 178 Pupils in Y5 and Y6 know well the parts of the human body and the function of organs. They accurately describe in their work the functions of the heart, liver and bladder. They draw detailed, labelled diagrams of the digestive systems and the skeleton.
- 179 Pupils recognise that in order to answer scientific questions, they need to put forward an hypothesis and test it to see if it is correct. More able pupils design

their own investigations and record their findings accurately using diagrams, tables and graphs. They make effective use of ICT in their investigative work to make tables and produce both bar and line graphs.

- 180 When designing an investigation to measure the effect of exercise on the human body, for example, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a fair test and are aware of problems which can arise when undertaking an investigation. The majority of pupils make good progress in drawing out the key features of the evidence they discover.

Shortcomings

- 181 There are no important shortcomings.

Information 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

- 182 Pupils' basic information technology skills are good throughout the school, including pupils with EAL. They generally have good keyboard skills and use the mouse with accuracy. Pupils are fully familiar with the computer operating system and use menus, icons and other on-screen navigation aids with ease. Older pupils know how to access the Internet and use search engines.
- 183 In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in their work and standards are above expectations at the end of Y2. They recognise and name the main parts of the computer system. Pupils enter information into the computer, store it, retrieve it and interpret it simply when needed. They change the size, colour and style of font to create different effects. With the teacher's support, they develop appropriate management skills and have a good knowledge of which program to use for a particular task. They produce patterns and designs using various art packages. Pupils' work shows that they know how to give instructions to a floor robot.
- 184 In key stage 2, pupils continue to develop their knowledge of software and effectively use a wider range of skills and standards are above expectations at the end of Y6. Many of the skills that pupils acquire are developed through their effective use across a range of subjects. Pupils use their spreadsheet skills to produce tables in mathematics, for example. They know how to enter a formula in a cell and 'drag and drop' that formula across a range of cells.
- 185 Pupils use appropriate software effectively to produce and use spreadsheets, databases and tables to record their work in several subjects. Pupils make effective use of the Internet as a research tool for class and project work and print relevant information. Pupils in Y6 use presentation programs effectively to support their work in other subjects, such as geography. They also produce good quality reports of school visits using word processing programs.
- 186 Pupils' communications skills are good. They use the Internet to research for particular artists as part of their studies on moving figures and know how to use a search engine effectively.

187 Pupils at both key stages make good use of the interactive whiteboard to consolidate their information technology skills and this has generated a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject within the school. Pupils make good use of the school digital camera to capture images to illustrate their work when combining text and graphics.

Shortcomings

188 There are no important shortcomings.

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

- 189 In key stage 1, standards are above expectations by the end of Y2. Pupils evaluate well, for example, when designing their Roly Poly plates. They illustrate their work well with diagrams, drawings and pictures.
- 190 Pupils also make good use of their ICT skills to produce working drawings. Their making skills are good and they generally think about ways in which their products could be improved.
- 191 In key stage 2, standards at the end of Y6 are above expectations. Pupils in lower key stage 2 draw effectively on their experience of making moving models to create 'story boards' based on a ghost story. They combine their drawing and designing skills well to produce a series of images in a logical sequence. They compare their finished products with their original intentions.
- 192 Pupils produce good storybooks for younger pupils, which show a good understanding of a 'target audience'. They apply their good drawing skills to produce attractive illustrations.
- 193 In upper key stage 2, pupils gather information independently when designing merry-go-rounds. They use visual sources to investigate mechanisms. Pupils generate a number of ideas and adjust them as they work. Their illustrations show that their ideas are well developed.
- 194 Pupils use tools appropriately to assemble their work and take care when sawing and sanding their frames for the merry-go-round. They make good use of the Internet to collect ideas about structures. Pupils also use control technology effectively to direct model cars on pre-determined courses.
- 195 In Y6, pupils have a good understanding of structures and mechanisms and combine this knowledge well in their design of a fairground. Pupils evaluate products well and use this knowledge effectively when designing their own products. Their planning books show that they evaluate work in progress well and adjust their plans accordingly. Their final evaluations are detailed and perceptive.

Shortcomings

196 There are no important shortcomings.

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

- 197 In key stage 1, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of life in the past. They also have an understanding of the passage of time, for example, they can tell why a doll is old, and give a clear explanation.
- 198 Pupils study the Tudors and their influence on Wales. Pupils use artefacts and other sources of information to good effect, which is reflected in their written work. There are good examples of empathy writing, where pupils 'put themselves in the shoes' of people from the past.
- 199 In key stage 2, pupils understand well that the lives of children in Merthyr in the nineteenth century contrast markedly with their lives at present. They can describe conditions in coal mines and in schools and the more able ask perceptive questions which they would ask children of Victorian times. They understand why Merthyr was an important town during the Industrial Revolution and are beginning to understand the contribution the town made to the economy of Wales.
- 200 Older pupils interpret photographic evidence well and know that eye witness accounts are accurate records of events. They are able to develop key skills in writing creatively, use information technology to search for evidence, compare their local area to other places in Wales and give logical and reasonable responses to solving problems that arose in social conditions in Merthyr during the nineteenth century. Pupils make good use of secondary evidence to make observations on life in Victorian times.

Shortcomings

- 201 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

- 202 Standards are above expectations throughout the school and pupils are making good progress. At both key stages pupils develop a secure knowledge and understanding of geographical terms and features and the character of the local area.
- 203 Pupils develop a sense of location and an understanding of their relationship with the environment. Many offer sensible and sound suggestions about how they can care for it. All pupils develop a good range of relevant geographical vocabulary which they use correctly in activities.
- 204 In key stage 1, pupils are able to devise their own map symbols, insert on a local map and track their route through to a local park from the school. More able pupils can recognise common map symbols.

- 205 Pupils in key stage 2 continue to develop their geographical knowledge of the surrounding area with a wide range of educational visits that includes a week's visit to a local field centre.
- 206 Pupils are developing a sound knowledge of the local environment and can distinguish between physical and human features. Many younger pupils can identify local services and attempt to draw simple symbols on maps to indicate them. They can give simple directions to places.
- 207 Older pupils are developing an understanding of river features and most can explain the causes of erosion and features, such as pools, in a river system. Pupils study and compare their locality to other places in Wales such as Snowdonia. They also study India as an alternative country. They are able to contrast the climate of the two countries as well as the effect of humans on Indian villages and towns.

Shortcomings

- 208 There are no important shortcomings.

Art

Key Stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings Key Stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
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Good features

- 209 In key stage 1, standards are above expectations by the end of Y2. Pupils explore colour, form, line and texture to create imaginative pictures using a wide range of media. They use fragments of posters to create their own work based on the colours and images in the fragment. Pupils investigate printing using a variety of objects at increasing levels of complexity, exploring pattern and colour to produce attractive designs.
- 210 Pupils make models from clay of a good standard, and demonstrate confidence and skill when using a range of media and tools to refine their work. They explore a range of techniques, such as diffusion and different ways of printing which they use effectively in their work.
- 211 In key stage 2, standards are above expectations by the end of Y6. Pupils explore printing using a range of Welsh artists as a stimulus. They also use the Internet effectively to search for images to use in their work. Pupils produce attractive prints that show the movement of a figure, which they then relate to the work of Marcel Duchamp.
- 212 Older pupils develop their use of line, tone, colour and texture to produce good examples of pastel representations of themselves and their class mates. In Y5 and Y6, pupils use a wide range of media, including charcoal, oil and chalk pastels and drawing pencils, to investigate line, tone, texture, shape and form. They use these techniques effectively when producing representational images in their work. Pupils explore the techniques of the work of several Welsh artists and use a range of media well, together with their knowledge of line, tone, form, texture and colour, to produce good examples of representational images in their styles.

213 Pupils in Y6 explore the forms of Thai jewellery and costume and make good observational drawings based on their studies. They have developed their ability to evaluate their own work critically and that of others. Pupils make good use of ICT to support their learning and successfully combine text and graphics to produce colourful images.

Shortcomings

214 There are no important shortcomings.

Music

Key Stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 215 Pupils in key stage 1 sing with clear diction, good pitch and good attention to breathing. They respond appropriately to hand signals. They know, understand and explain 'pitch' clearly and demonstrate their understanding well when playing tuned percussion instruments.
- 216 Pupils identify high and low notes and demonstrate these accurately when playing a sequence of three notes. They keep a steady beat when singing by clapping their hands and different parts of the body.
- 217 Pupils create an effective musical accompaniment to a story to which they have listened. Their work interprets the piece sensitively, showing its different musical elements using glockenspiels with confidence. They work well together in groups to achieve this.
- 218 Pupils demonstrate a high level of interest in music of different styles and participate with confidence and evident enthusiasm. They appraise one another's performances thoughtfully demonstrating a good knowledge of the musical elements of what they have heard and using well subject specific vocabulary. Pupils also understand and respond appropriately to pictorial notation when playing tuned percussion instruments.
- 219 Pupils in key stage 2 sing tunefully, paying good attention to posture, breathing, enunciation, pitch, beat, tempo and volume, to produce expressive singing. Many identify strong beats and can count accurately different beat patterns. They keep a complex beat well and know that 'pulse' is the musical term for a steady beat and can differentiate accurately between 'pulse' and 'rhythm'.
- 220 Pupils grasp quickly new musical concepts such as 'ostinato' and replicate it accurately then create an effective ostinato using percussion instruments well while others sing tunefully. All name correctly a wide range of percussion instruments.
- 221 Older pupils sing well in two-part harmony. They follow musical notation well and can beat the value of some notes, for example, crotchets, minims and quavers and they recognise the sign for a rest and interpret it accurately. They know that raps require a steady pulse and create effective examples using the interactive whiteboard.

222 All pupils appraise their performance and that of others perceptively and make good progress in their knowledge and performance of music.

Shortcomings

223 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

Good features

224 Most pupils achieve at least good standards and perform to the best of their ability.

225 Pupils in both key stages dress appropriately for activities and pay due regard to safety issues. Pupils in key stage 2 lift, transport and use equipment safely. Throughout the school, pupils work well in pairs or groups and they can evaluate their performances with clarity and accuracy. All pupils undertake a range of movements during warm up exercises and they understand the importance of health issues.

226 In key stage 1, pupils make good use of space and perform basic skills of jumping, balancing and climbing to a good standard. Many can hold shape for an appropriate time and transfer weight from one part of the body to the other. Pupils show increasing skills in rolling, throwing and bouncing a ball, developing hand and eye co-ordination.

227 In key stage 2, pupils are able to perform floor exercises to a good standard and transfer movements successfully to apparatus work. They use contrasting body shape, direction and speed well. They listen and respond appropriately to instruction, perform simple skills individually and co-operate effectively to perform to a partner or in a group. They enjoy the opportunity to explain their movements in gymnastic lessons. This highlights positive aspects of their achievements, provides encouragement and promotes the development of their own ideas.

Shortcomings

228 There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The governors and staff are delighted that the inspection findings recognise that St Mary's is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Pupils make good progress and achieved good standards irrespective of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. The report also acknowledges the support provided for pupils where English is not their first language is outstanding.

The report states that lessons are stimulating and challenging and that pupils make good progress towards fulfilling their potential. Governors are particularly pleased that assessment, monitoring of progress and reporting to parents are all outstanding features of the school. Inspectors have acknowledged the school is successful in providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and that learning experiences through a range of activities on and off-site is outstanding.

Governors are pleased the report reflects the skill and dedication of all staff and the good relationships they have with each other and with pupils. Teachers demonstrate how well they know their pupils, providing detailed and consistent information about pupils. The report also informs governors of the way in which the systems in place to track and closely monitor pupil's progress is an outstanding feature, while assessment of the foundation subjects is another major strength of the school.

Partnerships with parents is good, parents are very supportive and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

Staff and Governors are pleased inspectors acknowledged the progress the school has made in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection and the school is confident that the detailed and well structured self-evaluation document, together with the recommendations of the inspection team will assist them in the future developments which will need to be addressed.

Governors will work with the headteacher and prepare an action plan to address the recommendations in the report, which will then be implemented and documented through the SDP for 2007/2008 and beyond.

A copy of the schools actions to implement the inspector's recommendations will be sent to all parents and the progress the school is making in addressing the recommendations will be reported through the annual report to parents.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	St Mary's RC VA Primary School
School type	Nursery and Primary
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Address of school	Caedraw Road Merthyr Tydfil
Postcode	CF47 8HA
Telephone number	01685 722227

Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Davies
Date of appointment	July 1998
Chair of governors	Fr Michael St Clair
Registered inspector	Mr Stephen Dennett
Dates of inspection	23/10/07 to 25/10/07

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	12.5	23	21	27	24	27	23	20	194

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	7	2.3	9.3

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	17.7
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	15:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	23
Teacher (fte): class ratio	0.6:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Autumn 2006	88	92	85.4
Spring 2007	84	94	89.2
Summer 2007	88	90	90.5

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	21
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	1

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of key stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2007			Number of pupils in Y2:					24
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	
English:	Teacher assessment	School	0	8	25	67	0	
		National	0	3	13	63	20	
En: reading	Teacher assessment	School	0	17	38	42	4	
		National	0	4	14	55	27	
En: writing	Teacher assessment	School	0	13	21	67	0	
		National	0	5	14	68	12	
En: speaking and listening	Teacher assessment	School	0	8	8	75	8	
		National	0	2	10	63	24	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	8	17	46	29	
		National	0	2	10	64	23	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	8	21	46	25	
		National	0	2	9	66	24	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	66.7	In Wales	80.6

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Note: The above figures include four pupils who recently joined the school and who did not speak English as their first language.

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of key stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2007			Number of pupils in Y6								27
Percentage of pupils at each level											
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	9	22	44	26
		National	0	0	0	1	1	4	16	48	30
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	9	4	26	39	22
		National	0	0	0	1	1	3	14	48	33
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	9	9	22	52	9
		National	0	0	0	1	0	2	12	52	34

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	60.9	In Wales	74.2

D Pupils who are exempted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
W Pupils who are working towards level

Note: The above figures include four pupils who recently joined the school and who did not speak English as their first language.

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

- A team of four inspectors spent a total of ten inspector days at the school.
- Pre-inspection meetings were held with staff, parents and governors.
- Forty-five questionnaires were returned by parents and analysed.
- The school's self-evaluation report and a comprehensive range of other documents were examined.
- Forty-three lesson observations were undertaken.
- Samples of pupils' work from across the age and ability ranges were examined.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and listened to them read.
- Inspectors talked to the school council and observed lunch times and break times.
- Inspectors attended daily acts of collective worship.
- Post-inspection meetings were held with the staff and the governing body.
- The headteacher acted as nominee and assisted the team with gathering evidence and answering questions about the school.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Stephen Dennett Registered Inspector	Led on : Context, Summary, Recommendations and Appendices Key Questions 1, 5 and 6 Mathematics Science Information technology Design technology Art
Miss Helen Adams Lay Inspector	Led on: Key Question 4 Contributed to: Recommendations Key Questions 1 and 3
Mrs Branwen Llewelyn Jones Team Inspector	Led on: Key Questions 2 and 3 Under 5s English Music
Mr Enir Rees Morgan Team Inspector	Led on: Key Question 7 Bilingualism Welsh second language History Geography Physical education Contributed to: Recommendations Key Questions 1 and 4
Mrs Patricia Davies Nominee	Contributed to all key questions

Acknowledgement

The inspection team wish to express their thanks to the governing body, headteacher, staff, parents and pupils of St Mary's RC Primary School for the co-operation and assistance both before and during the inspection.

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