

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE  
SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT 1996**

***St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School  
Catholic Road  
Brynmawr***

***School Number: 677-3308***

***Date of Inspection: 6-8 May 2003***

***by***

***Mr M T Ridout***

***Registered Inspector***

***Date: 25 June 2003***

**Under Estyn Contract Number: CT98/02P**

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## **CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

A new nomenclature to describe pupils' progress through school was introduced in 1989. This system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to age 18 is intended to ease communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs and emphasise the importance of continuity.

The term "Reception" (R) is applied to the year group of pupils in a primary school (not a nursery class) who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. "Year 1" (Y1) is applied to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on to Y13, the year group who attain the age of 18 during the academic year:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Years	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

Key Stage (KS) 1 of the National Curriculum consists of Y1 and Y2; KS2 of Y3 to Y6; KS3 of Y7 to Y9; KS4 of Y10 and Y11 (which is the final year of compulsory education).

## **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

The five-point grading scale used to represent the main judgements in this report is as follows:

1. Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding.
2. Good: good features and no major shortcomings.
3. Satisfactory: good features outweigh some shortcomings.
4. Unsatisfactory: some satisfactory work but shortcomings in important areas.
5. Poor: many shortcomings.

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## 1. CONTEXT

### **The school and its priorities**

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary is a voluntary aided school, catering for boys and girls aged four to 11 years. The school was previously inspected in January 1997. There are 83 pupils on roll, including nine children who are under five years of age. The school is organised in four mixed-age classes. The children in reception are taught with pupils in Year (Y) 1 and Y2. There is a second mixed-age class in Key Stage (KS) 1 and further classes in KS2. The average class size is 20.75. There are four full-time teachers, including the headteacher, and one part-time teacher. Two nursery nurses and a teaching assistant support this provision.

The school is situated in Brynmawr, a small town close to the A465 'Heads of the Valleys' road in Blaenau Gwent. Many pupils come from the town of Brynmawr with a significant number travelling from other towns and villages, mostly along the A467 as far as Abertillery, to the south. The school describes the area as economically disadvantaged. Thirty-nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is above average. There are a small number of pupils from ethnic minorities. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language. English is the preferred language used.

The school receives pupils from the full range of abilities. The results of baseline assessments compare well with local averages. Some children begin school with good levels of achievement. Subsequent assessments identify 23 per cent of the pupils to have special educational needs (SEN). This is about average.

At the time of the inspection the school's accommodation was being refurbished and extended to include two new classrooms, a library, an under-fives classroom and a computer suite.

The school's aims are published in the prospectus. Targets for attainment at the end of KS2 are set and the school development plan (SDP) for 2002/3 identifies the following areas for improvement:

- To establish an early years unit to open in September 2003;
- To ensure the teaching of mathematics is both challenging and effective, with particular reference to problem-solving and data-handling skills;
- To establish a library, information technology suite and two new classrooms;
- To develop effective monitoring and tracking of pupils with SEN and ensure individual education plans (IEPs) are relevant;
- To develop assessment in religious education;
- To ensure staff are fully trained to effectively deliver the Welsh curriculum;
- To ensure that reading materials are more interesting, relevant and challenging;
- To develop the use of key skills in focussed planning;
- To develop links between the school and local businesses;
- To ensure all pupils have full access to the information and communications technology (ICT) national curriculum (NC) requirements;

- To provide adequate resources to assist planning and develop teaching in the foundation subjects;
- To ensure that the school premises are adequately protected out of school hours;

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### The main findings of the report

With the benefit of clear educational leadership provided by the headteacher, the school is making significant improvements in its provision. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and welcome the investment in new and refurbished classrooms.

- The educational provision for the under-fives has some weaknesses but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right. The school is implementing plans to open an early years class in September this year.

Language, literacy and communication skills	Satisfactory
Personal and social development	Satisfactory
Mathematical development	Satisfactory
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Satisfactory
Physical development	Satisfactory
Creative development	Satisfactory

- The standards achieved in the subjects of the NC in KS1 and KS2 are:

Subject	KS1	KS2
English	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Good
Science	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Welsh second language	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory	Good
Geography	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
History	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Physical education	There was insufficient evidence to judge standards	

- The school has successfully raised standards in art in both key stages and in English in KS2 since the last inspection. In information technology, improved provision enables the older pupils to achieve well in a much wider range of work.
- The good standards achieved in English and mathematics reflect the high standards attained in the end of KS2 NC tests.
- Standards of achievement in the key skills of speaking and reading are good. Standards are satisfactory in listening, writing, numeracy and the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- In the 39 lessons or parts of lessons observed standards of achievement were judged to be good in 39 per cent of lessons, satisfactory in 46 per cent and unsatisfactory in 15 per cent.

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- Progress in KS1 is generally satisfactory. Pupils learn a great deal orally but this achievement is not always reflected in the quality of their written work.
  - In KS2, progress is satisfactory overall. In English and mathematics, progress improves across the key stage. The older pupils often achieve well. However, insufficient opportunities for developing investigative research and enquiry skills limit pupils' progress and furthermore some of their written work does not fully reflect their good capabilities.
  - The more able pupils make too little progress where the work is insufficiently challenging and the progress of pupils with SEN is also limited where the work is not suitably adapted to their needs.
  - In the 2002 KS1 NC assessments, 77 per cent of pupils attained at least the nationally expected level 2 in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is below the most recent national figures and close to the average for similar schools<sup>1</sup>. The average over the last three years is 76 per cent.
  - In the 2002 KS2 NC tests, 96 per cent of pupils attained at least the nationally expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science. These results compare very well with the national picture and with the performance of similar schools. The average over the last three years is 78 per cent.
  - Results improved significantly in 2001 and again in 2002. This is a very good improvement and is a credit to the school.
  - The quality of provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Provision to promote their spiritual and cultural development is at least satisfactory. The school meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
  - Pupils' behaviour is good. The majority has positive attitudes to learning but where lessons do not fully engage attention and promote self-reliance their concentration waivers.
  - The level of attendance is good. However, registration procedures do not comply with statutory requirements because some registers are not completed at the specified time.
  - The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection examples of good teaching were observed in every class.
  - In the 39 lessons or parts of lessons observed teaching was judged to be good in 28 per cent, satisfactory in 49 per cent and unsatisfactory in 23 per cent.
  - The most effective teaching was observed in English, mathematics, music and physical education. In such lessons, subject knowledge is secure, pupils are fully involved and there is progression in learning.
  - However, teachers seldom provide enough activities to promote self-reliance and independence in learning. They generally use a limited range of teaching strategies and lesson planning doesn't always build on previous work through focused assessments or fully develop the lesson content.
  - The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is satisfactory overall. There are secure procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment. However, the use of

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<sup>1</sup> Schools with between 33 and 40 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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assessment information to closely match work to pupils' prior knowledge and promote higher standards is limited.

- The overall quality of curricular provision is satisfactory. There are particular strengths in personal and social education and extra-curricular provision but there are some shortcomings in overall planning to ensure progression in pupils' learning.
- There is no agreed whole-school planning for the development of key skills.
- Good emphasis is given to the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* and the school effectively raises pupils' awareness of local environmental issues.
- There are good arrangements for pupils' personal and social education including appropriate attention to issues of citizenship. The school is socially inclusive with all pupils, including those from ethnic minorities, strongly encouraged to play a full part in school life.
- There is good provision to enhance the curriculum through educational visits and visitors to the school, such as local composers. This provision includes a good range of extra-curricular club activities, including opportunities for competitive sport.
- The quality of support and guidance provided for pupils is good. This is reflected in the good relationships evident throughout the school.
- The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.
- The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with other schools and organisations in the local community.
- Although the school provides parents with an appropriate range of information, the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not contain all the information statutorily required.
- The school has a satisfactory partnership with local companies, which gives pupils some opportunities to learn about the world of work around them.
- The overall quality of the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement is good.
- The quality of leadership is good. The present headteacher is making a very significant impact in building on the school's partnership with the community, promoting teachers' professional development and planning the way forward for the school.
- The efficiency of the use and organisation of resources is satisfactory overall. There are some shortcomings in the deployment of support staff and the use and organisation of lesson time.
- The provision of staff is good. The range and quality of learning resources are satisfactory. The accommodation provided is currently unsatisfactory.
- The extent of progress in relation to the key issues raised in the last inspection is limited. However, positive progress is now being made in implementing a range of initiatives to promote educational improvements. Although it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives, they are very well targeted. The headteacher provides enthusiastic and effective leadership in this regard, and is very well supported by the staff.

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### **3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory overall.

- In the 39 lessons or parts of lessons observed standards of achievement were judged to be good in 39 per cent of lessons, satisfactory in 46 percent and unsatisfactory in 15 per cent.
- Children enter school with a range of attainments. Many have well-developed learning skills but a small minority have limited skills in language and communication. Taken overall, children in reception make satisfactory progress towards the Desirable Outcomes in the six areas of learning.
- Standards of achievement are satisfactory in language, literacy and communication skills, personal and social development, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in the physical and creative areas of development.
- Progress in KS1 is generally satisfactory. Pupils learn a great deal orally but this achievement is not always reflected in the quality of their written work.
- In KS2, progress is satisfactory overall. In English and mathematics progress improves across the key stage. However, too few opportunities for developing investigative research and enquiry skills together with the limited scope of some of the work undertaken, especially in the non-core foundation subjects, limit pupils' progress. As a consequence some of the pupils' written work does not fully reflect their good capabilities.
- The more able pupils make too little progress where the work is insufficiently challenging and the progress of pupils with SEN is also limited where the work is not suitably adapted to their needs.
- Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are learning English, make appropriate progress and gain confidence in using the language.
- Standards of achievement in English, mathematics and information technology are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.
- In KS1 and KS2, standards are satisfactory in Welsh second language, science, design and technology, history, geography, art and music.
- There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in physical education.
- The school's results in the NC assessments in KS1 improved up to 1999 and fell back in the following three years. In the KS2 NC tests, the overall trend shows a good improvement over time. The results in both key stages match or exceed the school's targets for attainment
- In the 2002 KS1 NC assessments, 77 per cent of pupils attained at least the nationally expected level 2 in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science.

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This is below the most recent national figures and close to the average for similar schools<sup>2</sup>. The average over the last three years is 76 per cent.

- In the 2002 KS2 NC tests, 96 per cent of pupils attained at least the nationally expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science. These results compare very well with the national picture and with the performance of similar schools. The average over the last three years is 78 per cent. Results improved significantly in 2001 and again in 2002.
- Analysis of the school's KS2 test results, on the basis of gender, indicates that the girls generally perform better than the boys. This is similar to the national picture. Inspection evidence indicates the boys and girls in Y5 and Y6 make similar progress in their class work.

### **3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum**

Standards of achievement in the key skills of speaking and reading are good. Standards are satisfactory in listening, writing, numeracy and the use of ICT across the curriculum.

- Children in reception make a satisfactory start in developing the early skills of literacy, numeracy and using information technology.
- In both key stages, pupils listen attentively and with interest for extended periods in a variety of situations. The majority respond well to oral work. The older pupils in KS2 communicate ideas effectively and express opinions clearly. Some pupils are articulate, offer detailed views and ask appropriate questions to elicit information.
- Pupils satisfactorily use reading to extend their learning in most subjects. Some of the older pupils have good library and research skills but opportunities to research topics, such as in history and geography, are often limited.
- Pupils are taught the conventions of writing but most rarely research topics with sufficient independence and then structure their own detailed accounts. Furthermore, the overuse of worksheets limits the quality of pupils' written responses.
- The pupils develop satisfactory numeracy skills, they solve appropriate problems in mathematics but they seldom build fully on their numeracy skills to collate and present data as part of their studies in science and geography for instance.
- The younger pupils use word-processing skills appropriately to record and present their work. The use of ICT skills is developing steadily in KS2. Pupils use appropriate word processing, graphics and multi-media skills and they are introduced to using simple databases. They are beginning to use the skills of ICT to enhance their work in other subjects but only a minority of pupils use a range of ICT applications with sufficient independence.

## **4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

The quality of provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Provision to promote their spiritual and cultural development is at least satisfactory.

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<sup>2</sup> Schools with between 33 and 40 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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- The school's ethos is warm and welcoming and reflects a caring, secure community where all pupils are valued.
  - The arrangements for whole-school assemblies, family mass and class prayers meet the statutory requirements for collective worship. These occasions are based on Christian values and make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
  - Pupils compose their own prayers and share them with the school. They regularly recite prayers, such as before lunch and at the end of the school day.
  - Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They are polite and courteous. Pupils develop positive attitudes and values and the school celebrates pupils' personal achievements. This increases their self-esteem.
  - Good relationships between pupils and staff are based upon trust and mutual respect. The staff are good role models for pupils. The pupils in turn respect and respond well to the adults in the school and also to visitors. They display appropriate respect for people, property and their environment.
  - Whilst pupils readily take appropriate responsibilities such as monitoring duties, they lack sufficient opportunities to use their initiative and work more independently.
  - Pupils are encouraged to think of and help those less fortunate than themselves. They regularly raise money for charities.
  - Pupils' cultural awareness is extended by visits to places of interest in the locality. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is well established within the school. For example, a concert is held annually to celebrate St David's day. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the values, beliefs and traditions of a diversity of cultures other than their own are limited.
  - Pupils' response to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes**

Pupils' behaviour is good overall. The majority has positive attitudes to learning.

- In general, pupils behave well in and around the school but a minority becomes restive where the pace of lessons is slow.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and the interest they show in their work is initially good, but their ability to sustain concentration and effort is sometimes reduced where lessons do not fully engage their attention or sufficiently promote self-reliance.
- Taken overall, the standard of pupils' behaviour has a positive impact on their standards of work and the quality of life in the school.
- The school has effective strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. Good records of disciplinary matters are kept and parents are properly informed if their child misbehaves. The school's discipline policies provide sound procedures for handling any instances of misbehaviour, bullying or racism. No instances of significant misbehaviour occurred during the inspection.
- As part of the school's awards scheme, staff reward pupils with stickers and certificates for hard work, good behaviour, positive attitudes, good citizenship and helpfulness. The

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achievements of two pupils in each class are regularly recognised at a weekly assembly. Both pupils and their parents value these schemes.

- Pupils have good relationships with each other and with all members of staff. They are very courteous and self-confident when talking to visiting adults. There is appropriate provision to promote racial harmony.
- The older pupils take on appropriate responsibilities such as helping in assemblies and passageways and supporting the younger children.
- There have been no exclusions in the past 12 months.

### **4.3 Attendance**

The overall level of attendance is good.

- Levels of attendance averaged 95.2 per cent during the previous term. This figure is similar to attendance levels during the past year and is significantly higher than the overall level of attendance at the time of the last inspection.
- Over the past year, there has been no unauthorised absence. This is mainly because the school operates good procedures for quickly following up any unexplained absence with parents.
- The Education Welfare Officer gives good support and visits the school at least twice a term.
- The school conscientiously encourages good attendance and punctuality by rewarding pupils weekly.
- Pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day is generally good, although a small minority was seen to arrive late during the inspection.
- The school's registration procedures do not comply with the requirements of National Assembly for Wales circular 3/99 because some registers are not fully completed at the specified time.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- In the 39 lessons or parts of lessons observed teaching was good in 28 per cent, satisfactory in 49 per cent and unsatisfactory in 23 per cent. During the inspection, examples of good teaching were observed in each class.
- Taken overall, teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. The most effective teaching was observed in English, mathematics, music and physical education. In such lessons, subject knowledge is secure, pupils are fully involved and there is progression in learning.
- However, teachers seldom provide problem solving and research activities across subjects to promote greater self-reliance and independence in learning.
- In general, there is too little emphasis on the use of incidental Welsh and there is too little emphasis on the teaching of skills in design and technology and ICT, in some classes. For

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example, in KS1 and lower KS2, pupils use only a narrow range of ICT applications and in too many lessons they make no use of the computers available to them.

- The teaching of the under-fives is appropriate but its effectiveness is reduced in the current context. The nursery nurse makes a positive contribution to this teaching. There is strong emphasis on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.
- In most subjects, lesson planning is based on appropriate schemes of work that provide for progression and continuity. However, the content is not always fully developed and topics are often not fully exploited.
- Teachers generally use a limited range of teaching approaches and organisational strategies. They effectively teach the whole class, use clear explanations and questioning well but seldom adapt and focus their teaching, during group work for instance, to match pupils' differing learning needs.
- Although staff have high expectations of pupils' discipline and attainment, the slow pace of some lessons, together with the limited scope of the work set, limits pupils' achievements, especially in written tasks. Furthermore, too little guidance is given to ensure a consistently good quality of presentation.
- Although teachers' records clearly identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics, the use of assessments to help match work more closely to pupils' abilities is not well developed. This results in a lack of appropriate challenge in some of the work, especially for more able pupils.
- The recently introduced marking policy has yet to impact on practice. Too little use is made of marking to improve pupils' achievement and ensure good progress is maintained.

## **5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is satisfactory overall.

- The accuracy and consistency of assessment are satisfactory. Baseline assessments are systematically administered in reception. The school complies with statutory requirements for NC assessment and target-setting. The NC results are analysed appropriately to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance.
- The arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. The school's policy gives appropriate guidelines for the assessment of pupils' achievements.
- Progress and attainment are systematically assessed across both key stages. A range of standardised tests is used annually in reading, language and mathematics. Based on the results, individual targets are set for further improvement.
- A revised and simplified system to track pupils' progress over time is being implemented. The system is beginning to inform teacher assessments and provides a helpful measure of pupils' progress.
- The system of 'curriculum walks' through which teachers assess pupils' work has enabled staff to identify individual points for improvement in English and mathematics.
- Teachers keep a variety of informal assessment records and an assessment profile for each pupil. This contains samples of work completed during the year, mainly in English and mathematics, but the use of NC assessment criteria to establish the levels achieved is

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inconsistent. This reduces the effectiveness of the profiles in providing evidence for assessment and moderating purposes.

- The extent to which assessment of the work of individual pupils is used to promote higher standards is limited. The use of the assessment information available to guide lesson planning and promote higher standards is not consistently developed.
- There are appropriate systems for assessing pupils with SEN and the information is used appropriately to set targets in the IEPs.
- The annual reports to parents about their children's progress are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. There are opportunities for parents to comment in response to the report.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The overall quality of curricular provision is satisfactory. There are strengths in personal and social education and extra-curricular provision but there are some shortcomings in overall planning to ensure progression in pupils' learning.

- The provision for children under five includes a range of learning activities that appropriately promote progress towards the Desirable Outcomes. However, current planning is not closely enough linked to the required six areas of learning as appropriate schemes of work have yet to be fully developed.
- The curriculum in both key stages is broad. It includes all subjects of the NC and religious education. The school is making good progress in implementing 'new' schemes of work in several subjects. There is appropriate provision in all subjects except mathematics.
- Strong emphasis is given to literacy and numeracy. However, the overall effectiveness of the curriculum is reduced where investigative, research and enquiry skills are not fully developed such as in mathematics, science and history. Furthermore, the scope and depth of pupils' studies are further limited where topics are not developed in sufficient detail.
- The school has yet to draw up a whole school curricular plan to ensure overall balance is assured. Currently there is an imbalance in the time and emphasis given to the non-core foundation subjects such as design and technology, geography and music. This limits continuity and progression in learning.
- There is no agreed whole-school planning for the development of key skills.
- Good emphasis is given to the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* and the school effectively raises pupils' awareness of local environmental issues.
- The school has recently introduced marking strategies, but there is no agreed policy for the presentation of pupils' work. In general, pupils are given insufficient guidance on how to present and organise their work with the result that the presentation of their work often lacks care and is untidy.
- Where homework is regularly set this has a positive impact on the standards achieved.
- There are good arrangements for pupils' personal and social education including appropriate attention to issues of citizenship. The school is socially inclusive with all pupils strongly encouraged to play a full part in school life.

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- There is good provision to enhance the curriculum through educational visits and visitors to the school. This provision includes a good range of extra-curricular club activities, including opportunities for competitive sport.
  - In general, the school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum but sometimes the needs of pupils of differing abilities are not adequately catered for.
  - There are no pupils for whom the NC is modified.

#### **5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

The quality of support and guidance provided for pupils is good.

- The school provides a happy, pleasant and caring environment in which positive attitudes and good relationships are well promoted. Pupils and parents value the breakfast club. This is a successful feature of the life of the school.
- The teaching and support staff know the pupils well and take a keen interest in their progress and welfare. Pupils' personal achievements are celebrated in assemblies but the guidance they receive in their learning, such as through marking and the organisation of learning tasks is not always sufficiently focused.
- The school has an appropriate child protection policy. The headteacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for dealing with child protection issues. The staff are familiar with the procedures and their obligations in this area.
- The school has appropriate policies and procedures to promote health and safety, equality of opportunity, personal and social education, racial equality and sex education. Pupils are well supervised at break and lunchtimes. Support staff and midday supervisors make a valuable contribution to the care and welfare of the pupils.
- High priority is given to the social inclusion of all pupils. The needs of the small number of 'looked after children' and children from ethnic minority backgrounds, including those who are learning English, are effectively monitored and addressed.
- The headteacher routinely carries out risk assessments. Outside visits are well organised and supervised to ensure pupils' well-being is put first. Good attention is being given to this aspect during the building works at the school.
- Effective arrangements are in place to deal with pupils who are ill or who have an accident. Incidents are routinely recorded and the parents contacted. However, there is currently only one qualified first-aider in the school with up-to-date training. The school has plans in hand for more training.
- Due attention is given to fire safety procedures, with drills being held at regular intervals. A small number of potential hazards to health and safety were drawn to the school's attention by inspectors. The headteacher responded positively.

#### **5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN**

The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

- The school's policy for pupils with SEN gives clear guidelines to all involved. The requirements of the SEN Code of Practice and the Building Excellent Schools Together programme are effectively met.

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- The day-to-day arrangements are suitably managed by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) who provides appropriate support and guidance to class teachers and support assistants.
  - The governing body has appropriate arrangements to oversee SEN in the school. There is a named governor who is familiar with SEN procedures and regularly liaises with the SENCO.
  - Pupils with SEN are identified early. Individual education plans are detailed; they identify specific needs, aims, targets and the individual steps to be taken to address pupils' needs.
  - The IEPs are regularly monitored and reviewed by the SENCO to ensure that specific areas for improvement are targeted and progress is monitored. Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that parents are fully supportive of the measures adopted by the school and that they are involved in the planning and review of pupils' work and their progress towards the targets set.
  - The learning support assistants (LSAs) work effectively with pupils who have SEN. They are aware of pupils' targets and have a good understanding of their needs. Pupils with SEN have full access to the curriculum and their progress is commensurate with their age and ability. However, their progress is not always maximised where lesson planning is not specific enough in outlining differentiated tasks and approaches.
  - The school receives good support from the local education authority for pupils with SEN and those from ethnic minorities.

## **5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions**

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with organisations in the local community.

- About three-quarters of parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, and a very large majority of their responses expressed strong support for the school. These views were confirmed by further brief discussions with parents during the inspection.
- Most of the information provided to parents through useful handbooks, regular newsletters, reports and meetings is of satisfactory quality. However, the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not contain all the information statutorily required. All parents have responded to the home/school agreement.
- The Parent Teacher Association has been suspended during refurbishment of the school. No parents regularly help out in the school but a number attend Family Mass and assist during educational visits.
- There are good links with the Catholic parish church, whose priest is the vice-chairman of the governing body. He regularly leads worship in school and contributes to teaching and learning in several areas of the curriculum, including information technology. Pupils in each class help to plan a weekly mass and attend special services at the church at the times of the church festivals.
- There are good links with educational, social and medical services. The school nurse regularly visits the school to monitor pupils' general health and helps to deliver the school's sex education programme. Particularly good support is received from social

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services, two of whose members visit the school weekly to support looked-after children under the 'Echo Project' initiative.

- The police youth liaison officer regularly talks to pupils about matters concerning their personal safety. At the beginning of the current school year, he helped pilot a personal and social education project at the school. Pupils also attend the 'Crucial Crew' courses organised by the police to raise their awareness of crime and their own responsibility to the community.
- There is a good partnership with two local comprehensive schools. Pupils in Y6 attend 'taster' days, sports and social events. The schools share resources and there is an effective mathematics bridging link. Teachers exchange visits and curricular information to ensure that the subsequent transfer of pupils to the secondary schools is as smooth as possible.
- Some comprehensive school students come to St Mary's as part of their work experience and students from Ebbw Vale College and Cardiff Nursing College come to the school as part of their training. The school does not have a partnership with an initial teacher training institution.
- At harvest festival time, pupils prepare parcels that are given to local retired people. Older pupils entertain residents of three nursing homes and people attending at the day centre in the parish church.
- There are useful links with the local council with whom pupils discuss issues.

## **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

The school has a satisfactory partnership with local companies, which gives pupils some opportunities to learn about the world of work around them.

- Although the school does not have an agreed policy or strategy to promote links with local business each class is linked to a local business.
- As part of this initiative, pupils have made useful visits to local shops, agencies and companies in support of the curriculum. These include two local superstores, a cinema, a wind farm and a hydroelectric plant.
- Several nearby shops and businesses support the school through the donation of money and/or materials. These include sponsorship from a local printing company.
- Several people from local companies and agencies have come to the school to talk to pupils about their jobs as part of the 'people who help us' programme. Recent visitors include a policeman, 'Mrs Tufty' and employees of a bakery firm to which a return visit by pupils has been arranged.
- The local Education Business Partnership has sponsored the attendance of one teacher on a mathematics working party in collaboration with a local superstore.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement**

The overall quality of the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement is good.

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- The scope and effectiveness of the school's procedures to evaluate the quality of its provision are good. The systematic canvassing of the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils is used to inform the wide-ranging SDP.
  - The staff are becoming more closely involved in the evaluation of the standards achieved through 'curriculum walks' that identify strengths and shortcomings in pupils' achievements in particular subjects.
  - The range and nature of the objectives for improvement the school has set in the latest SDP are wholly appropriate to the school's needs.
  - With the support of governors, the headteacher and staff have formulated a very wide-ranging SDP. It provides a clear basis to take the school forward and forms the basis of a cyclic programme of review and evaluation. Although the plan includes suitable qualitative goals it lacks sufficiently detailed quantitative targets.
  - The school has made a good start in implementing the SDP. This is most evident in the provision of policies and the review of progress and standards, particularly in English and mathematics. However, these initiatives have not had sufficient time to fully impact on the school's practice.

## **6.2 Leadership and Efficiency**

The quality of leadership is good. The efficiency of the use and organisation of resources is satisfactory overall.

- The recently appointed headteacher is making a significant impact in building on the school's partnership with the community, promoting teachers' professional development and planning the way forward for the school. He is well supported by the governing body.
- Leadership is beginning to ensure a clear sense of educational direction with positive plans being formulated to improve provision for the under-fives and develop greater consistency in teaching and learning across the school. Significant improvements have been made this academic year in the provision of policies, schemes of work and a comprehensive SDP.
- The school has well defined aims and values that reflect its Catholic foundation. These aims are evident in the school's positive ethos that values pupils' achievements and their contribution to school life. There is a positive commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Teachers are developing their contribution to educational leadership well, such as by contributing to whole-school evaluation and reviewing provision in their roles as subject co-ordinators.
- The governing body is appropriately organised and fulfils nearly all of its statutory obligations. The linking of individual governors to aspects of the school's work is a positive development and promotes a useful dialogue with the school.
- In general, staff and learning resources are effectively deployed. However, the use of support staff is inefficient where they are not fully involved in the lesson and in the case of the class catering for the under-fives, too little time is allocated.
- There is also a lack of rigour in the allocation of time to subjects and the use of lesson time. This is reflected in the limited extent of pupils' productivity and effort in some lessons.

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- The school budget is well managed. Income and expenditure are systematically monitored and the pattern of expenditure matches the school's educational priorities.
  - There is good attention to best value in making purchases and agreeing service level contracts. Although expenditure priorities are carefully planned there is little evidence of clear procedures to evaluate the impact of major spending.
  - Day-to-day administration and organisation are generally effective. The headteacher is managing the demands of running the school alongside a major rebuilding project well.

### **6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

The provision of staff is good. The range and quality of learning resources are satisfactory. The accommodation provided is currently unsatisfactory.

- The adequacy of staffing, including the match of teachers' qualifications to the subjects they teach is good. Most teachers are experienced and some have undertaken further qualifications. Overall, they have the necessary knowledge to teach the subjects of the NC and religious education.
- All teachers have responsibilities for the curriculum and assessment. These duties are carried out diligently. Teachers work well together as a team and all show a strong commitment to the school. Visiting teachers for Welsh, music and ethnic minority support make a positive contribution to the curriculum.
- The support assistants work effectively alongside the teachers and give good support to the pupils. The secretary, canteen staff, midday supervisors, cleaning staff and caretaker perform their duties effectively and efficiently.
- The arrangements for staff induction, appraisal and continuing professional development are good. Teachers attend appropriate in-service training courses that are linked to priorities for school improvement. Every member of staff has a detailed job description that notes their responsibilities and duties.
- The accommodation is currently inadequate for the number of pupils on roll. This imposes constraints on the quality and range of curricular provision, particularly for the under-fives. The quality of the learning environment is satisfactory in other classes but limited space restricts movement and some practical activities.
- The location of the library, the piano, several computers and the interactive whiteboard in the hall restricts the range of physical education activities that can be safely organised. This limits standards. Furthermore, the location of the library restricts opportunities for pupils to build on their library skills and develop greater independence in learning.
- The provision of new classrooms, a library, a computer suite and a staff room is expected to resolve these issues.
- Resources for learning are generally satisfactory and are appropriately used to foster learning. Good use is made of the community and educational visits.

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## **7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **Standards achieved by pupils**

#### **Provision for the under-fives**

The educational provision for the under-fives has some weaknesses but there is evidence that these weaknesses can soon be put right.

- Children enter school with a range of attainments. Baseline assessments confirm children's attainment levels compare well with local averages. A good number of children have well-developed learning skills and a small minority have limited skills particularly in language and communication.
- There are eight children in the reception year. They are taught in a mixed-age class with pupils in Y1 and Y2. There is limited provision of a qualified LSA in the mornings in this class.
- Children make at least satisfactory progress overall. They benefit from working in small groups and their progress towards the Desirable Outcomes in the six areas of learning improves where qualified support is provided.
- The accommodation for the under-fives is inadequate and this is having an adverse impact on the quality and range of learning experiences that the school can provide.
- Standards of achievement are satisfactory in language, literacy and communication skills, personal and social development, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in the physical and creative areas of development.
- Good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are strongly encouraged. The children benefit from effective pastoral care and support.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The qualified support assistant makes a positive contribution to children's learning.
- The required baseline assessment is systematically implemented and appropriate records of children's progress are maintained.
- Although the school has yet to develop a curricular plan for the work of the under-fives, that is securely based on the required six areas of learning, the classteacher works hard to adapt the curricular guidance available and ensure a suitable range of learning activities is provided.
- The range of learning resources available is very limited.
- There is effective communication with parents, particularly on a day-to-day basis and parents are appreciative of the provision made for their children.
- The school is aware of the current shortcomings in its provision for children under five. It plans to establish a nursery and reception class in the autumn term and to update its curricular provision.

#### **Good features**

##### **Language, literacy and communication skills**

- Children use language well to talk with an adult about what they are doing. They develop their knowledge of initial sounds by naming objects and are making a good start in letter

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formation. They can write their name and have a good knowledge of how text and pictures convey meaning.

- They develop their vocabulary well and reinforce their learning by singing a range of songs.

#### **Personal and social development**

- Children relate well to one another and to adults when working in small groups. They take appropriate responsibility for tidying up and are beginning to share equipment and ideas well, such as during structured play.

#### **Mathematical development**

- Children count in sequence to 20 and some are beginning to write the numbers. They name common two-dimensional shapes, match shapes to pictures and are developing their knowledge of patterns and symmetry well.
- They use appropriate mathematical vocabulary to describe the features of shapes and patterns when comparing size, position and capacity.

#### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

- The children have a developing understanding of materials and talk confidently about how different things feel. They distinguish between old and new when sorting Teddy Bears and observing houses, for example. Children use the mouse to control events on the computer screen appropriately.

#### **Physical development**

- Children are beginning to understand the concept of space in the hall and playground. They change speed and direction, follow instructions, curl and stretch appropriately and show improving balance and co-ordination.

#### **Creative development**

- Children produce attractive portraits using paint, pencil, charcoal and chalk to positive effect. They copy and clap repeated patterns accurately and sing a range of songs from memory well.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Children seldom reinforce or extend their learning by selecting from a range of tasks that support and extend previous learning with an adult.
- Children do not engage in a sufficient range of creative and investigative tasks.
- Children do not sufficiently develop the full range of physical skills, such as large pushes and pulls nor do they work with sufficient independence.
- Children do not make enough use of incidental Welsh; neither do they sufficiently develop key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT within the tasks they undertake.

#### **English**

Standards of achievement in English are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

#### **Good features**

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- In both key stages, pupils listen attentively and with interest for extended periods in a variety of situations.
  - In KS1, pupils respond well in oral work and they communicate freely in familiar situations and speak appropriately to adults. Older pupils can express their ideas and opinions confidently and readily speak in a range of contexts, both in small groups and in whole-class situations.
  - Pupils read fluently and accurately according to their age and ability. A small number can describe the story and characters in their books. The more able read confidently, accurately and with expression. They are able to talk about the content and storyline of a book. The regular use of 'Big Books' helps to increase pupils' fluency and expression.
  - Pupils write appropriately for different purposes. They show a developing awareness of punctuation and spelling patterns. A small minority of pupils succeed in using a variety of sentence structures and they punctuate correctly. The older, more able pupils sometimes write imaginative stories of a good standard.
  - In KS2, pupils achieve well in speaking and listening. Most pupils listen attentively; they communicate ideas clearly and express opinions effectively. Some pupils ask appropriate questions to elicit information in class discussion. The older pupils are articulate and offer detailed views and opinions.
  - There is clear progress in reading skills across the key stage. Pupils read accurately, fluently and at a level commensurate with their age and ability. A few read well with good expression and intonation. They express views on choice of books and their favourite authors, recall the events of a story well and predict the ending of a story.
  - In Y5 and Y6 many pupils are proficient readers who have developed preferences for different authors and genres of writing. Their comprehension skills are well developed. Pupils read with understanding; they find accurate information from texts and other sources and record their findings appropriately.
  - Across KS2, pupils write well for different purposes and audiences, including letters, stories, poems and reports. The older pupils have successfully written book reviews on authors such as Roald Dahl, Jenny Nimmo and Jenny Dale.
  - Most pupils organise their work into paragraphs, which are correctly punctuated and they are confident when using dialogue. The more able pupils have a secure understanding of punctuation, spelling patterns and paragraphing. The content of their writing is coherent and interesting.
  - Pupils draft and re-draft their work to improve the quality of their writing. They regularly check their spellings using dictionaries appropriately. In the best examples pupils' handwriting is generally neat, well formed and presented.
  - Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are learning English, make appropriate progress and gain confidence in using the language. They use their developing oracy skills well at work and play.

### **Shortcomings**

- In KS1, pupils do not take sufficient care in identifying the features of texts and language patterns.
- They do not build sufficiently on their reading skills while working independently and they seldom record their answers to questions in well-structured sentences.

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- The pupils do not make enough use of drafting and redrafting to improve their writing skills. They do not produce a sufficient variety of extended pieces of good quality imaginative and factual writing.
  - The standard of presentation and handwriting is widely variable across both key stages.

## **Mathematics**

Standards of achievement in mathematics are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils develop a suitable mathematical vocabulary and their grasp of number bonds and of regular numerical patterns is generally appropriate for their age.
- They have a sound understanding of addition and subtraction of single digit numbers. They confidently count in 10s to 100 and fives to 50. They use a variety of terms, such as 'add', 'plus', 'take away' and 'subtract' and use the appropriate mathematical symbols when recording sums.
- Most pupils know the value of coins and confidently add amounts of money up to £1.00 and some confidently record larger amounts showing clear knowledge of place value.
- They have a basic knowledge of symmetry and the properties of shapes. They identify two and three-dimensional shapes appropriately and are beginning to describe their properties.
- In lower KS2 pupils consolidate number facts to 20. They use their knowledge of the four operations well to solve mathematical problems and further their knowledge of fractions and decimals; they investigate symmetry and consolidate their knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shapes.
- In upper KS2, pupils develop competence in completing more complex calculations using the four operations in number and learn strategies to check their calculations. They have an appropriate knowledge of number patterns.
- The majority confidently round, sequence and partition numbers and are beginning to understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.
- They have a good knowledge of regular shapes and are becoming familiar with the vocabulary used to denote their properties. They identify different types of angles and know how to calculate area and perimeter.
- They collect and present information in a variety of tables and graphs well.
- Pupils make good progress in KS2 and attain well in the end of key stage NC tests.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils in KS1 are insufficiently aware of number patterns and relationships. They carry out only a limited range of practical investigations and seldom tackle sufficiently challenging number calculations.
- Pupils do not make enough use of graphs and charts to record findings and seldom explore different methods to solve problems through practical investigations.
- In KS2, pupils do not readily explain their methods of calculation and are slow to recognise alternative strategies.

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## Science

Standards of achievement in science are satisfactory in both key stages.

### Good features

- In KS1, pupils know how to make a basic electrical circuit and identify the uses of electricity in the homes. They identify light sources, investigate shadows, know a battery is a power source and are aware of the dangers of mains electricity.
- They have a satisfactory knowledge of animals and plants, they group foods appropriately and investigate the effect of 'push' and 'pull' forces on the movement of toys and other objects appropriately.
- Pupils know that objects are made of different materials and are beginning to distinguish between magnetic and non-magnetic materials.
- In lower KS2, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of living things and the conditions for germination and growth. They confidently name the parts of a plant and describe methods of seed dispersal.
- Pupils understand the importance of oral hygiene, name the different teeth and their purpose and further their knowledge of electrical circuits and symbols.
- In upper KS2, pupils have an appropriate knowledge of the requirements of a healthy diet, they investigate forces and have a sound knowledge of life cycles.
- They know that some changes in materials are reversible and others are not. They understand terms such as 'solution' and 'dissolving' and know the effect of adding an extra bulb to a simple circuit. When conducting investigations pupils generally follow directions and draw appropriate conclusions.

### Shortcomings

- Pupils in KS1 have limited skills of planning, investigation and prediction. They undertake a narrow range of work.
- In KS2, pupils rarely make sufficient use of their prior learning in science, to set up their own fair test, consider variables and work out suitable methods of recording information.
- Across the school, pupils use only a limited range of scientific language and seldom write sufficiently detailed accounts that include their prediction, method and results.

## Welsh second language

Standards of achievement in Welsh second language are satisfactory in both key stages. The school has a strong Welsh ethos.

### Good features

- In KS1, pupils enjoy their Welsh lessons and show real enthusiasm in learning the language. They listen intently and a good number answer questions readily using simple speech patterns and a basic working vocabulary.
- Pupils are familiar with simple greetings and instructions and confidently answer simple questions. They copy simple sentence patterns such as '*Beth yw hwn?; Pêl yw hon*'.
- When using the 'Big Book' approach, pupils successfully ask questions and offer explanations in Welsh.

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- Pupils develop an increasing vocabulary and respond satisfactorily to a range of questions such as *'Beth wyt ti'n hoffi?; Nac ydw, dwi ddim yn hoffi'*.
  - Pupils develop a sufficient working vocabulary to sustain a simple dialogue and make satisfactory progress in identifying and using a range of language patterns.
  - In KS2, pupils build on previous work by repeating and extending set phrases about themselves, clothes, colours, weather and other topics being studied. They use familiar language patterns when expressing their likes and dislikes, for instance, and respond positively to simple commands and greetings.
  - Pupils show growing confidence in using the language and effectively rehearse language patterns during role-play situations. Their listening skills are put to effective use during these lessons.
  - Pupils develop their reading skills well during shared reading sessions using the electronic whiteboard. Their ability to pronounce Welsh words is developing satisfactorily.
  - Pupils reinforce their oral work and reading by completing appropriate written tasks. Pupils' writing is based on the topics studied in Welsh lessons and consists of simple sentences. The standard is satisfactory.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils generally have a limited vocabulary. They practise speaking Welsh in a narrow range of contexts and this inhibits their oral fluency.
- Pupils do not make enough use of incidental Welsh within daily routines or across the curriculum.
- In both key stages, many pupils lack confidence when speaking in Welsh and offer only brief responses. They show only a limited ability to apply familiar sentence structures to new situations.

### **Design and technology**

Standards of achievement in design and technology are satisfactory in both key stages.

#### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils satisfactorily develop basic making skills such as cutting and joining materials. They assemble and decorate a fairground carousel, make furniture for a model house and investigate a variety of puppets before making an example of their own.
- The younger pupils in KS2 further develop their making skills through building a model robot from 'found' materials. They successfully follow a basic design, cover the robot with shiny material and add an electric circuit to illuminate its eyes.
- Pupils make furniture for a model Tudor house and assemble a rolling toy powered by a rubber band. They make simple oral evaluations of their products and the older pupils evaluate different building materials and methods of jointing such as using glue, screws or nails.
- The older pupils make satisfactory progress in analysing the designs of Williams Morris and produce their own panels. They pay appropriate attention to colour and textures, cut materials appropriately and show a developing awareness of the processes involved in converting a two-dimensional plan into a three-dimensional product.

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### **Shortcomings**

- In both key stages pupils do not produce work of sufficient originality because their choices of materials and the range of skills taught are limited.
- Pupils seldom evaluate products in relation to the needs of the user and do not progressively develop their designing and making skills across the school.
- Pupils in KS2 lack knowledge of the designing and making process and their making skills are limited. They do not research or investigate design topics in sufficient depth and some of their designs lack imagination because they do not draw on a wide enough range of sources.
- Pupils across the school do not communicate their ideas sufficiently using ICT, such as using computers to sequence events and make things happen, nor do they fully explore control technology.

### **Information technology**

Standards of achievement in information technology are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

#### **Good features**

- In KS1 pupils use word-processing applications appropriately. They insert, copy, amend and print with support. Some pupils select and import graphics to improve the presentation of their poems and stories.
- The younger pupils in KS2 further their word-processing skills well. They insert text and know how to save, amend, print and retrieve their work. They confidently use CD-ROM to research information and operate different learning programs.
- Pupils enter information about the Tudors into a database and learn how to execute a search. They also enter survey data and generate tables and graphs to present their findings.
- The older pupils in KS2 have good publishing skills. They confidently access a range of programs and use on-screen features and tools effectively.
- Pupils have a developing knowledge of web-site design and enthusiastically evaluate the features of different web sites. They know how to send e-mails and how to access and download information from selected Internet sites and CD-ROM.
- Effective use is made of the interactive whiteboard and a multi-media program. Pupils evaluate their presentation about *Tymawr*, the iron master's house and show developing competence in editing their sequence of screen images and links.

#### **Shortcomings**

- In KS1, many pupils lack sufficient confidence and independence in basic skills such as saving and retrieving their work and simple operations such as printing.
- In lower KS2, pupils make insufficient use of CD-ROMs and the Internet to sharpen their research skills and enhance their learning in other curricular areas.
- Across the school pupils make too little use of control, modelling and simulation programs and rarely use spreadsheets. They have limited skills in these aspects.

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## History

Standards of achievement in history are satisfactory in both key stages.

### Good features

- In KS1, pupils' historical skills are developing satisfactorily. Pupils are aware of chronology and use appropriate vocabulary relating to the passing of time.
- Pupils make sensible comparisons between things from a long time ago with those of today. They compare pictures of artefacts and develop an appropriate understanding of the differences between life in the present and life in the past.
- In their study of the Victorian period pupils compare life in a Victorian school and schools of today. They use photographic evidence appropriately to identify similarities and differences in the clothes worn, the appearance of the classroom and school routines.
- Pupils learn about major events such as the Great Fire of London. They use a range of resources to support their work including primary source material such as Samuel Pepys' diary to sequence events.
- In lower KS2, pupils make comparisons between the lives and clothes of the rich and poor in Tudor times. They know that Henry VIII married six times. Pupils gain insights into the daily life of a Tudor household and through discussion, they display appropriate familiarity with historical terms. Most pupils recognise the difference between fact and fiction and their enquiry skills are developing satisfactorily.
- In upper KS2, pupils study local historical sites such as the Nantyglo and Blaina Ironworks sites. They gain a satisfactory understanding of the way in which change occurs over time and begin to understand that a number of factors lead to change.
- Good use is made of timelines by pupils to develop their awareness of chronology. They successfully sequence the periods of history they have studied and their use of vocabulary relating to the passage of time is developing satisfactorily.
- Pupils' develop a satisfactory knowledge of Welsh history, they study famous characters such as St David, William Morgan and Laura Ashley and when studying the Romans, they visited the legionary remains at Caerleon, for example.

### Shortcomings

- In KS1, pupils do not make enough use of artefacts to enable them to learn through first-hand experiences.
- Pupils seldom pose questions or research information independently and the over-reliance on worksheets limits the quality of pupils' responses.
- Across the school pupils' independent research and enquiry skills are limited.

## Geography

Standards of achievement in geography are satisfactory in both key stages.

### Good features

- In KS1, pupils satisfactorily develop their knowledge of features of the locality. They draw simple maps of the school and identify familiar features on maps of the area. They identify Brynmawr and Porthcawl on a map of Wales and make simple comparisons between the towns.

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- In KS2, younger pupils confidently name the countries of the United Kingdom and use appropriate language to describe different kinds of houses. They identify the main features of Brynmawr and begin to make comparisons with life in India through their study of Chembakoli.
  - The older pupils successfully compare the features of Brynmawr and Abergavenny and consider the environmental impact of improvements to the nearby Heads of the Valleys road. They identify features on maps of the locality, including where children live and their route to school and they know how to interpret a key.
  - Pupils make appropriate use of maps and atlases and have a basic knowledge of the features of life in Nigeria.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not have a sufficiently wide range of geographical knowledge and skills such as those linked to the use of maps, aerial photographs and local studies.
- Pupils do not sufficiently demonstrate the skills of geographical enquiry. They use a limited range of geographical terms and have a limited understanding of the links between physical features and human activity.

### **Art**

Standards of achievement in art are satisfactory in both key stages.

### **Good features**

- In both key stages pupils use a range of materials and techniques across a variety of activities. They work confidently using different media including paint, chalk, charcoal, pencil, pastels and crayons. Most pupils have a good knowledge of colour mixing and a satisfactory awareness of colour, tone and texture. This is evident in their work depicting the seasons.
- Pupils in KS1 use their observational skills and knowledge of shape and form satisfactorily to draw and paint old and new teddy bears. The older pupils show further accomplishment and skills in their collage work capturing the images based on a bird's story.
- In KS2, younger pupils further develop their understanding of line and tone through producing satisfactory drawings of landscapes in crayon, pastels and paint from direct observation.
- The older pupils make satisfactory progress in analysing the designs of Williams Morris in terms of colour and design and carefully produce their own designs using a range of materials.
- Pupils are familiar with the work of some established artists and they make satisfactory efforts to emulate their styles and techniques. For example, they have investigated the work of Pablo Picasso and Thomas Gainsborough and produced satisfactory work in these styles.
- Pupils use sketchbooks appropriately to record detailed drawings of objects including leaves and fruit and develop their awareness of textures through weaving with different thicknesses of wool.

### **Shortcomings**

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- Pupils do not develop a sufficient range of artistic skills and techniques and rarely use information technology to produce pictures and patterns.
  - Pupils seldom develop the skills of sculpture through the use of materials such as clay in three-dimensional work.
  - Pupils do not explore the art forms of other cultures sufficiently to enable them to appreciate and understand the skills of people from different ethnic backgrounds.

## **Music**

Standards of achievement in music are satisfactory in both key stages.

### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils know a variety of rhymes and sing from memory. They sing enthusiastically and to a good standard.
- They keep a steady beat whilst clapping and playing simple rhythms and readily recall previously learned songs and rhymes. They are becoming confident in performing with their peers.
- Pupils identify the tempo of music as fast or slow or getting faster or getting slower. Most understand that certain dynamic levels can convey feelings of sadness or happiness.
- Pupils make music together as a class using body percussion and untuned instruments to a satisfactory standard.
- In KS2, pupils enjoy performing Celtic music for instance. The older pupils follow a graphic score and demonstrate an appropriate understanding of dynamics.
- Most pupils recognise and name a range of tuned and untuned instruments and handle them with care.
- Pupils have a basic understanding of the essentials of composition. They learn musical vocabulary and differentiate musical elements. They appraise musical compositions successfully and listen to music from different periods.
- Pupils sing confidently in tune and with a clear sense of rhythm. The quality of singing is good. The pupils give appropriate attention to all the musical elements when performing.
- The school choir offers an extended range of musical experiences for the pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The choir performs at local concerts and festivals.
- Some pupils' performing skills and knowledge of music are enhanced by learning to play the guitar, whistle, flute, drums or violin with peripatetic teachers.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not develop sufficient knowledge and understanding of composers and musical styles. They seldom record their evaluations.
- Pupils make insufficient use of their information technology skills to enhance their work in music and progress in developing and refining compositions is limited by too little time being spent on collaborative tasks.

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## Physical education

There was insufficient evidence to judge overall standards in physical education, as it was not possible to observe the full range of work in the subject. The school's physical education programme reflects the requirements of the NC. Standards are enhanced through extra-curricular activities including rugby, football, skipping, netball, cricket and athletics.

### Good features

- Pupils generally change into suitable clothing for physical education lessons. They undertake an appropriate range of different movements during 'warm-up' exercises. The pupils listen attentively to instructions and make good use of space.
- They work energetically on a series of games activities and apply their skills effectively to cope with various demands.
- Pupils know the importance of exercise for health and understand the effect of energetic activity on the heart. They undertake appropriate 'warm-up' exercises and know the importance of 'cooling down' after vigorous activity.
- The younger pupils demonstrate increasing control of their movements when running and jumping. They explore different ways of travelling across the floor and show a good awareness of space.
- The older pupils achieve well in games. They skilfully pass, receive, shoot and dribble with a ball and learn to play tactically as a team. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and the work of others.
- Pupils attend swimming lessons and the school reports that they make good progress. The majority learn to swim at least 25 metres.

### Shortcomings

- The pupils do not develop a sufficient range of movement and gymnastic activities.

## Religious education

Inspectors were not required to judge standards of achievement in religious education in this inspection. The inspection of religious education forms part of a denominational inspection and standards will be reported to parents in another report.

## 8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

The extent of progress in relation to the key issues raised in the last inspection is limited. However, the recently appointed headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, is implementing a range of initiatives to promote further school improvement. Although it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives they are very well targeted.

- **raise standards in art in both key stages;**

The school has successfully raised standards in art. An appropriate policy and scheme of work are now in place and pupils undertake a suitable range of work.

- 
- **continue to develop schemes of work, particularly in art and music, in order to secure continuity and progression in all strands of the NC to ensure that appropriate guidance is available for the teaching of all subjects;**

Although suitable schemes of work are provided for music and art, and most other subjects, planning to secure continuity and progression in all strands of the NC is not yet complete. There is as yet no overall long-term curricular plan to guide teachers and key elements, such as planning for the under-fives, have yet to be fully developed.

- **adopt agreed strategies to ensure that standards for the presentation of pupils' work and practices in marking are consistent throughout the school;**

The school is aware that it has not sufficiently improved the standards of presentation in pupils' work. It has recently adopted a marking policy to guide teachers but this is not yet fully reflected in day-to-day practice.

- **ensure that all the necessary documentation is compiled, including the provision of comprehensive information for parents and clearer guidance to staff on all aspects of the life of the school;**

There is much progress in this aspect. Parents are appreciative of the range of information provided. Although there are some omissions in the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus, both documents are informative and well presented. Furthermore, the staff handbook and other written guidance provided for the adults employed in the school are appropriate.

## **8.2 Key Issues for Action**

In order to improve further the quality of education, the school and the governing body, with the support of appropriate agencies, should build on the SDP to:

- improve curricular provision for children under five and further raise standards in the six areas of learning;
- further raise standards across both key stages in those subjects where standards are satisfactory and improve standards in the key skills of writing and using ICT;
- improve rates of progress, especially for more able pupils, and promote greater independence in learning for all the pupils;
- increase the range of teaching and organisational strategies used, provide more opportunities for research and investigation and ensure sufficient depth in pupils' studies;
- strengthen lesson planning and use assessment information effectively to provide appropriately challenging work;
- further refine schemes of work to provide a long-term curricular framework that incorporates planning to promote the development of key skills across subjects;
- build on the SDP, systematically prioritise whole-school initiatives and assure their achievement through rigorous monitoring and focused evaluations;
- ensure statutory requirements are met for registration and for the publication of the required information in the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary
School type	Voluntary Aided
Age-range of pupils	4–11 years
Address of school	Catholic Road Brynmawr Blaenau Gwent
Post-Code	NP23 4EF
Telephone Number	01495 310596

Headteacher	Mr T Baxter
Date of appointment	1 September 2002
Chair of Governors	Mr T Pritchard
Registered Inspector	Mr M T Ridout
Dates of inspection	6–9 May 2003

### B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	8	11	12	18	5	15	14	83

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	4	1	4.2

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil : teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	19.76:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	20.75
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.05:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	R	KS1	KS2	Whole school
Summer 2002	98.0	94.3	96.6	96.1
Autumn 2002	96.2	94.2	95.1	94.9
Spring 2003	95.8	95.7	94.9	95.2

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0
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## C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 1: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results: 2002			Number of pupils in Y2: 18					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	23	54	23
		National	0	0	4	13	62	21
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	15	54	31
		National	0	0	4	13	54	29
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	31	62	8
		National	0	0	5	13	70	12
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	23	54	23
		National	0	0	3	11	63	23
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	23	54	23
		National	0	0	2	9	60	29
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	15	62	23
		National	0	0	2	10	67	21

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	77	In Wales	80

D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996 or, in the case of the Task/Test were absent.

W Pupils who are "working towards" level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1.

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results: 2002			Number of pupils in Y6: 16										
Percentage of pupils at each level													
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	25	63	12	0
		National	0	0	0	-	1	1	6	19	48	25	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	44	50	0
		National	0	2	1	1	0	0	5	14	47	30	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	25	63	12	0
		National	0	0	0	-	0	1	4	20	47	28	0
	Test/Task	School	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6	31	63	0
		National	0	2	1	1	-	0	4	18	42	32	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	19	63	19	0
		National	1	0	0	-	0	0	3	15	52	29	1
	Test/Task	School	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	69	31	0
		National	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	13	51	31	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	25	63	12	0
		National	0	0	0	-	1	1	6	19	48	25	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	44	50	0
		National	0	2	1	1	0	0	5	14	47	30	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	77	In the school	96
In Wales	63	In Wales	63

- D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996.  
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence.  
N Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence.  
B Pupils not entered for tests because they are working outside the levels of the tests.  
W Pupils who are “working towards” level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1.

#### D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

- The inspection team consisted of three inspectors who worked for six inspector days over three days gathering first-hand evidence. In total, 39 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Inspectors observed classes and evaluated the children’s work.
- Inspectors visited registration sessions and school assemblies and observed break times. All full-time teachers were observed teaching several times. Discussions were held with members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, representatives of the governing body, parents and others both during the inspection and initial inspection visits.
- All the available work and records of a representative sample of at least two pupils from each class, plus the work of a sample of pupils with SEN was scrutinised. A representative number of pupils were heard to read both formally and informally.
- A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection.
- The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 28 parents and carers before the inspection and considered 44 responses to a questionnaire.
- A limited range of work in physical education was observed.
- The registered inspector reported the main findings to the staff at the end of the inspection and held a post-inspection meeting with governors.

## E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
Mr M T Ridout	RgI	The school and its priorities Educational standards Standards in key skills Teaching Curriculum Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Provision for the under-fives	mathematics science design and technology information technology geography
Mr S Page	Lay	Behaviour and attitudes Attendance Partnership with parents, the community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
Mr B M Lewis	Team	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment recording and reporting. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Provision for pupils with SEN Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	English Welsh as a second language history music art physical education

*The visiting inspectors wish to thank the governors, the headteacher and all the staff for the co-operation and courtesy they received during the inspection.*