

Re-inspection of St Illtyd's Primary School, Merthyr Tydfil

6-7 February 2008

St Illtyd's R C Primary School was inspected during the Spring Term 2007 and judged to be in need of significant improvement.

Estyn undertook a follow-up inspection in February 2008, as part of the Welsh Assembly Government's requirements for monitoring schools in need of significant improvement.

Outcome of the re-inspection

St Illtyd's R C Primary School is judged to have made good progress in relation to most of the recommendations for improvement identified in the inspection in February 2007. As a result, this school has been removed from the list of schools in need of significant improvement. This report is a written summary of the re-inspection findings.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made good progress in relation to most of the recommendations identified in the inspection of February 2007.

- **Raising standards in English**

Overall, good progress has been made. The school has focused considerable attention on the development of oral skills. This is having a positive impact on standards particularly at the upper end of key stage 2 where most pupils' oral skills are good. Pupils at the upper end of key stage 2 make good progress in developing their reading and writing skills. They write extended pieces of work that include stories, poems, reports and letters. These pupils also write well in other subjects. Generally, the presentation of work is good although standards of handwriting are still variable.

- **Raising standards in mathematics**

Overall, some good progress in mathematics has been made. Progression in mathematics is evident throughout the school. In key stage 1, pupils are generally able to compare by length although their skills in comparing objects by weight and capacity is still underdeveloped. These pupils are beginning to develop data-handling skills but this is still an area that needs further work. In key stage 2, older pupils recognise percentages of an area. They use standard units of length in a range of contexts and simple instruments to measure capacity. Older pupils solve relevant mathematical problems, organise their work well and use appropriate diagrams to present information.

- **Conducting performance management effectively**

Performance management is conducted effectively and an appropriate policy is in place. Regular monitoring of teachers is undertaken by senior staff and feedback is given on the outcomes of the monitoring. Three performance management targets are set for each teacher that relate to the whole school, the teacher's class and individual priorities. Progress in achieving targets is discussed with performance management leaders. Teachers are required to provide evidence of progress made in achieving the agreed targets and where necessary, support plans are developed. The performance management process is ensuring an appropriate focus throughout the school on teaching and learning.

- **Using assessment information effectively**

Generally, teachers use assessment information well to inform the planned programme of work. End-of-key-stage teacher assessment outcomes are analysed in detail, including the progress of the significant number of English as an additional language (EAL) pupils. This analysis is being used to set relevant whole-school targets and to assess the impact of EAL pupils on the end of key stage attainment data.

There is good use in all classes of learning objectives and success criteria and these are clearly linked to the assessment of pupils' performance. For example, the teacher in the Year 5/6 class is making appropriate formative comments on pupils' written work. These assessments identify pupils' strengths and what they have to do to improve their work.

All teachers have been involved in moderation exercises where the quality of pupils' work is discussed. Optional assessment materials are also being used in key stage 2 to ensure that the assessments of pupils' work in relation to National Curriculum levels are consistent and accurate.

- **Involving pupils in their own assessment**

Pupil self-assessment has developed well. In all classes, pupils assess their own work in line with the success criteria set for specific lessons. A variety of appropriate approaches to pupil self-assessment are used for different age groups of pupils. For example, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are involved in assessing the quality of their work using written comments and a 'traffic-light' system. In the reception class, children stand on coloured mats to indicate their understanding of how well they have completed a task.

Pupils are also beginning to evaluate their own work in detail in a range of subjects including English and design and technology and some peer assessment takes place within groups in the top junior class. In all classes, pupils use individual target setting books. These outline targets for English, mathematics and personal development. Pupils set the targets as a result of discussions with teachers.

- **Establishing continuity and progression in learning for pupils in mixed age classes**

Collaborative planning, discussions between teachers and the moderation of pupils' work ensures continuity and progression in learning for pupils in mixed-age classes. In key stage 2, teachers now plan their work well and this is generally well-matched to pupils' abilities.

- **Developing pupils' bilingual skills**

The school has taken a positive approach in developing bilingualism with staff and pupils. The athrawes fro provides extensive support for teachers to develop bilingualism in individual classes. As a result, all teachers use incidental Welsh throughout the day and a recent initiative, 'Tocyn Iaith (language token reward system)', provides an incentive for pupils to increase their use of Welsh in all classes. This is beginning to have a positive impact in the school.

The school engaged a consultant to evaluate the level of bilingualism used by staff and pupils. This audit identified areas for development and actions to be taken. As a result of this audit, the Welsh subject leader now provides regular guidance and support for staff development. An intensive programme of Welsh training is planned for teachers.

Since the inspection in 2007 the school has worked very well with the local authority. The local authority has made important contributions to the improvements that have been made and has supported the school effectively through a structured series of adviser visits. These visits have been targeted to support the school's progress in addressing the recommendations identified in the inspection report.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and build upon the good progress made, the school needs to:

- further develop the use of mental calculations and the application of mathematical strategies to solve everyday problems;
- further improve standards in spelling and handwriting;
- ensure that the very good teacher assessment and pupil self-assessment evident in some classes are applied consistently throughout the school;
- with the help of the local authority, continue to provide the good support currently available for the large number of EAL pupils;
- continue to implement the performance management system effectively;
- ensure that the newly qualified teachers and temporary staff continue to receive adequate support and guidance; and
- maintain close working arrangements with the local authority to achieve further improvements.