



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School  
Argae Lane  
Barry  
CF63 1BL**

**Date of inspection: January 2011**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR  
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

St Richard Gwyn is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive with 629 pupils on roll and is the only Catholic high school in the Vale of Glamorgan. It has a large catchment area that includes parishes such as Llantwit Major, Cowbridge and Rhoose in the west, and Barry and Penarth in the east. It also admits a small number of learners from the west of Cardiff. The school has grown steadily in recent years.

Within the last six years the school has made a £2.2 million investment in its buildings. A major part of the school was redecorated and refurbished following a flood in July 2007. The governors are currently debating the next phase of the building plan.

The school's intake is from a varied social background. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 13.8%, which is below the national average of 17.1% for secondary schools. Academic ability on entry is below national averages and for the last three years nearly a third of pupils entering the school have had a reading age two years or more below their actual age. The school has 27% of pupils on the special educational needs register, compared with the national average of 19.6% for secondary schools. About 9% of pupils come from ethnic minorities, mainly of mixed background with no particular group strongly represented.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School is £3,983, which compares with a maximum of £4,339 and a minimum of £3,733 for secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The school has the sixth highest budget per pupil out of the eight secondary schools in the authority.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

St Richard Gwyn is a good school. Its good features include:

- pupils' improving standards in public examinations and the good standards they achieve in lessons;
- the school's promotion of Welsh and the standards that pupils achieve in the language;
- pupils' positive attitudes to work and school life;
- the broad and balanced curriculum, including the promotion of good human values;
- good teaching and assessment;
- outstanding care, support and guidance; and
- effective leadership and management.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- leadership and management are good;
- the school knows its strengths and areas for improvement well by means of thorough self-evaluation processes;
- many effective procedures have started to improve performance; and
- staff work together very well to improve pupils' performance and the quality of education that the school provides.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in key stage 4 in science and the performance of boys.
- R2 Adapt work more effectively to meet the needs of the range of learners within each class.
- R3 Ensure that the quality of marking is consistently good across all subjects.
- R4 Refine development planning to include more specific and measurable targets.
- R5 Engage with a wider range of employers in order to extend work-focused experiences for learners.
- R6 Explore further opportunities to improve outdoor facilities for sports.

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

In key stage 3, the school's performance has improved significantly in the last three years, and is now generally above the average for all schools in Wales. In 2010, the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) was much higher than the average for the family of schools. Compared with the benchmark indicator for schools with a similar percentage of free school meals, it was in the second quarter, having been in the fourth quarter three years ago. There has been a particularly good improvement in English, which in 2010 was the best in the family at level 5, and among the best at level 6. It was in the first benchmark quarter for the last two years. Mathematics and science were close to or better than the family average at both level 5 and level 6 in 2010, but were mostly below in the previous two years. In 2010, mathematics was just in the second benchmark quarter while science was in the first. Almost all non-core subjects improved significantly from 2008 to 2010.

In key stage 4, in the last three years, performance has generally been better than the average for schools in Wales. The percentage of pupils achieving the level two threshold including English and mathematics was well above the family average in 2010, and either similar to or better than the family average before this. It was in the third benchmark quarter in 2010. The percentage achieving the level 1 threshold has been consistently equal to or better than the family average and was in the first benchmark quarter in 2010. The core subject indicator has been just above the family average, although it dropped to the fourth benchmark quarter in 2010. Performance at level 2 in English and mathematics has compared well with the family and the benchmark group, but performance in science has been relatively weak. In 2010 performance exceeded expectations, based on key stage 3 assessments, in most of the main indicators.

Boys performed significantly worse than girls in key stage 4 in 2010, when the gender gap was wider than for schools in Wales, but the school has made good progress in narrowing the gender gap in key stage 3. Pupils with additional learning needs generally achieve in line with expectations. Pupils claiming free school meals achieve broadly similar results to other pupils. The performance of pupils from ethnic minorities is not significantly different from that of other pupils.

In 2010, no pupils left school without a qualification. Most school leavers continue in full-time education.

Pupils make good progress in their learning over the course of each key stage. In many of the lessons observed, pupils achieved good and sometimes excellent standards. In many subjects, they evaluate their own and peers' work very well and have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Pupils listen very attentively, to each other as well as to the teacher, and respond well to questions, often at some length. They take part willingly and productively in discussions in small groups or pairs. They get on with tasks quickly, are willing to work hard at solving problems, and remember and apply previous learning in doing so. With the help of the school's intervention strategies, pupils make good progress taking into account their reading ages when they start at the school. They develop the ability to read effectively for information and to read aloud confidently and expressively. They show a good grasp of subject-related vocabulary. Writing ability is less well developed than other literacy skills, but more able pupils write well and produce some very good work. They make generally good progress in mathematics, and when necessary apply number skills appropriately in other subjects. Pupils use information and communications technology well in specific tasks, particularly in a few subjects such as history and geography,

Pupils make very good progress in Welsh and show considerable enthusiasm for the language. The standard of work in key stage 4 is very high. Able pupils speak and write accurately, fluently and at length. In 2010, all Year 11 pupils entered for a qualification in Welsh, with 60% entering the full course GCSE examination. GCSE results were excellent with most pupils gaining at least a C grade, and over half obtaining A\* or A grades. The number of pupils following the full course GCSE has increased annually, and is now approaching 80% of the year-group.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe at school, and most feel that they have someone to turn to if they have a problem of any kind. They receive useful information about health and fitness, and many know how to eat healthily. Many take part in regular physical exercise, often through the wide range of activities organised by school staff or the 5x60 programme, or in the good number of school teams.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely good. They arrive punctually and work hard in lessons. They know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Annual attendance rates are consistently high compared with other schools in Wales, and the school has been in the top benchmark quarter for the last three years. Behaviour is very good. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years, while temporary exclusions are low. These and other sanctions for misbehaviour have reduced year on year.

Pupils participate in a wide range of non-sporting extra-curricular activities, for example work with the local community and parishes, as well as fund-raising for charities. They express their opinions about school life through a well-organised system by which form groups feed into an active and effective school council.

Pupils show considerable respect and concern for others and tolerance for views that are different from their own. They are very polite, welcoming and helpful to visitors.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Good**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which meets statutory requirements as well as the needs of the learners. Effective transition arrangements ensure that pupils build on the knowledge, skills and understanding gained at primary school.

The school meets the needs of all learners by collaborating effectively with other providers to offer a wide range of vocational and general courses both at the school and in other institutions. The school has recently strengthened the curriculum by introducing the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification in key stage 4. Within this programme pupils now have the opportunity to achieve key skills qualifications.

Recent initiatives within the school have helped to develop pupils' key skills more effectively across the curriculum. There is a particularly effective focus on improving literacy skills in key stage 3, and this is a significant strength.

An extensive and varied extra-curricular programme includes dramatic, musical, cultural and sporting activities.

The school's promotion of the Welsh dimension and the Welsh language is good, and provision is developing well. The school encourages the use of incidental Welsh well, though this not yet fully developed. Some staff use incidental Welsh effectively, and there are many bilingual signs around the school.

The promotion of sustainable development is improving. The school increases learners' understanding of global citizenship well through personal and social education (PSE), the Welsh BaccaLaureate and subjects such as geography and religious education.

### **Teaching: Good**

In many lessons, teachers plan lessons well, share clear learning objectives with pupils and relate work well to pupils' previous learning. They use a wide range of techniques that engage learners' interest, including regular group and pair work and particularly effective use of stimulating web-based video resources. Many teachers ask probing questions to get pupils thinking and challenge pupils to expand on their initial responses. They often use short effective tasks to focus learners' attention at the start of lessons or to introduce relevant concepts and vocabulary. Teachers develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding well during the lessons. In a few cases, they set extended tasks for more able learners. Teachers encourage pupils to review the achievement of learning objectives at the end of a majority of lessons. They generally manage the work of learning support assistants well.

In a minority of cases, teachers do not adapt the work enough to meet the needs of the range of learners. Now and then, the rapid movement from one short task to another interrupts learning too much, or pupils are confused by over-complex tasks. In a few lessons, learners spend too much time on low-level tasks, such as copying.



Most teachers use assessment for learning techniques regularly to see how well learners understand tasks and concepts. In a few classes, for example in Welsh, the use of these techniques is very good. The quality of marking is sometimes very good, for example in history and mathematics, but it varies within and between departments. Excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress include detailed analysis of the performance of specific categories of pupils, such as those with free school meals. Using these regular records, teachers effectively monitor the progress of pupils with significant barriers to their learning. Annual and half-yearly reports to parents are of good quality.

**Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The school provides a coherent, well-planned and exceptionally effective system of care, support and guidance for pupils. The very strong pastoral team, together with pupils' learning experiences, have a very positive impact on pupils' health, wellbeing and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The personal and social education curriculum is extremely comprehensive and very well planned. This, the pastoral programme and daily reflection together provide pupils with varied opportunities to discuss, reflect on and deal with important issues relevant to many aspects of their lives.

Pupils also broaden their experiences, and take on new responsibilities and interests, through a wide range of enrichment or charity activities and the well-established school council. The health and fitness coordinator provides an extensive programme of physical activities, supported by the 5x60 programme.

Arrangements for identifying and addressing pupils' personal and learning support needs are very effective. The pastoral team makes highly effective use of the very comprehensive and sophisticated tracking system to monitor pupils' progress and behaviour closely. They respond immediately when pupils have difficulties, and act quickly to implement support systems that match pupils' individual needs. Pupils also receive very good support from peer mentors, or in the case of younger pupils from older pupils through the school's 'Big Friendly People' scheme. In addition, the school provides very good specialist guidance and support through an extensive range of external organisations and professionals.

The school has a strong and effective focus on promoting pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to school. Several successful features include the work of a behaviour support officer and a comprehensive system of rewards, sanctions and warnings that pupils understand well.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

High-quality provision for learners with additional learning needs makes a major contribution to the school's inclusive ethos. All learners have access to the full range of learning experiences and have opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications. The tracking and monitoring systems lead to successful support strategies. The team of learning support assistants provides very good in-class support across a

range of subjects, while withdrawal sessions provide effective support for specific needs, for example through the accelerated reading programme.

The above carefully co-ordinated good features lead to many noticeable and measurable positive outcomes. These include pupils' attitudes to school, the decreasing number of referrals for behaviour, high attendance and improving academic performance.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is a very caring and inclusive community. Its work and life are firmly centred on the spiritual, personal and educational development of each individual pupil. Provision to challenge stereotypes is very good. The personal and social education course and the programme of pastoral reflection address, very effectively, issues such as equal opportunities, human rights and oppressive behaviour.

The accommodation is in good condition and allows all pupils full access to the curriculum. The chapel, which opens out into the hall, is particularly impressive. The innovatively refurbished pupil toilets are of a particularly high standard. The overall provision and use of learning resources is good. However, provision for outdoor sports activities is inadequate.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Leadership: Good**

The school has an effective leadership structure that enables a strategic approach to improving pupils' standards and wellbeing. The headteacher allocates leadership roles well to ensure effective communication of the school's vision, values and strategic aims, allied with a strong system of accountability. All leaders and managers have clearly-defined roles and responsibilities.

The senior leadership team work well together and effectively promote a school ethos that values all pupils and staff. Staff at all levels share a sense of purpose and fulfil their roles well to ensure a consistent, school-wide focus on pupils' achievement and wellbeing.

Leaders have reviewed and improved performance management processes to include a strong focus on the impact of actions on teaching and learning. All leaders use data well to monitor performance and to challenge practice. The performance management system, peer observation and curriculum area reviews combine well to identify good practice and areas for development in teaching. In the light of this information, leaders support and challenge teachers effectively to improve their skills.

All staff have a good understanding of the priorities for strategic planning, which has contributed well to developing a learning culture. Middle leaders make good contributions to curriculum development, and many teachers take on responsibilities to develop new ideas and contribute to whole school initiatives.

Governors support the school well. They are clear about the school's vision and values and understand their roles well. They are well informed about the work and performance of the school, help to set the school's strategic priorities, and have promoted several improvements.

The school has responded positively to Welsh Assembly Government current priorities, including Learning Pathways 14-19, a focus on improving wellbeing and literacy, and the School Effectiveness Framework.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Leaders know their school well through very good systems for self-evaluation. The school's self-evaluation report gives an honest and detailed account of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The school has developed a clear planning and review cycle, and self-evaluation procedures that are thorough and regular. Leaders use a very good range of processes to gather evidence, including curriculum area reviews by senior leaders, curriculum area self-evaluations, peer observation, scrutiny of pupils' work, pupil tracking and pastoral reviews. The school's data tracking systems enable a rigorous analysis of pupils' performance. Leaders and managers also take good account of the views of parents and pupils.

Leaders use information from self-evaluation well to identify strategic priorities and to plan for improvement. The school improvement plan prioritises pupil outcomes well and focuses strongly on improving teaching. Leaders use the plan's clear priorities as a focus for further self-evaluation and monitoring activities. This consistent and sustained approach has resulted in improvements in several key areas, such as assessment for learning, pupils' behaviour, and literacy skills. However, targets for improvement are not always sufficiently specific or measurable. This means that leaders are not always able to assess progress accurately against the targets, or measure the efficiency and effectiveness of particular actions.

There are many opportunities for teachers to share their professional knowledge and explore new ideas. Teachers have formed working groups both within the school and with teachers in other schools to develop strategies for school improvement. These associations have had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has developed effective links with a wide range of partners.

Highly effective transition arrangements with partner primaries, which include a residential course for Year 6 learners, mean that pupils entering Year 7 settle into school life smoothly. Well-organised activities successfully promote curricular progression and continuity between key stage 2 and key stage 3. Post-16 links are also good, and ensure successful progression into further education or training.

The school has very good links with St David's College, Cardiff and the Vale Further Education College and the Military Preparation College, which contribute to a very

wide range of appropriate and interesting courses being offered to key stage 4 pupils. Subject options are explained effectively to parents and learners in very-well attended open evenings. Clear channels of communication between partners ensure that learners make appropriate progression when on courses delivered outside school. Robust quality assurance procedures across partnerships include the use of focus groups to gather learners' views and lesson observations by senior staff.

A valuable link with a local employer provides useful additional mentoring for learners who find working with numbers difficult. However, links with employers are relatively limited. Strong links with the Catholic community provide very good opportunities for learners to take part in charity work.

There are good links with the Diocese. There are termly meetings with the local authority link inspector to discuss school improvement issues. Links between the school and the local authority are improving.

**Resource management: Good**

The school carefully prioritises and regularly monitors expenditure with a strong focus on improving outcomes for pupils. The governors' finance and staffing group monitors relevant information and provides useful advice to ensure that the budget is properly balanced. In recent years a well-considered recovery plan, supported by the local authority, effectively addressed a budget deficit.

Departmental budgets, appropriate to departments' needs, are allocated through a well-understood and suitable formula.

Remodelling of the workforce has resulted in an organisation in which staff are deployed effectively and efficiently to support learning.

The school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Estyn received 141 completed questionnaires from parents or carers.

Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and state that pupils are happy there. They say that there is a good range of activities and visits. Parents feel that their children are well taught and expected to work hard; they are encouraged to take on responsibility and are making good progress. They state that the school is well run and they feel welcome when they visit it.

Most parents feel that the school treats pupils fairly and with respect, provides good guidance and support, and successfully encourages pupils to be healthy. They say that their children are safe at school. They are well informed about their children's progress and understand complaints procedures.

#### **Responses to learner questionnaires**

Estyn received responses from 161 pupils, selected at random across all year groups.

Nearly all pupils feel safe at school while most have someone to talk to if they are worried. They also feel that they are encouraged to take on responsibility and do things for themselves. Most pupils feel they are doing well and that teachers help them to progress and prepare for their future. They have enough books, equipment and computers, and get plenty of opportunities for regular exercise. They say that the staff respect them and their background and help them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds.

Many say that the school teaches them to be healthy. A few state that the school does not deal well with bullying, although many pupils feel that it does. Many say that the school listens to their views, but a minority say that it does not. A minority say that some pupils behave badly and prevent them from getting their work done, and that the staff do not treat them with respect, but the majority disagree with these views.

Many pupils in key stage 4 say they received good advice when choosing their option courses.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Steffan James HMI	Reporting Inspector
Christine Hooper HMI	Team Inspector
Ceri Jones HMI	Team Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Team Inspector
Barry Norris	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Robert Phillips	Peer Inspector
Vivian Burman	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

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## Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11