



*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 Mary's R.C. Primary School  
Lea Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 7NA**

**Date of inspection: February 2013**

**by**

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



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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**© Crown Copyright 2013: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.**

**Publication date: 02/05/2013**

## Context

St Mary's Catholic School is a large primary school situated close to the town centre of Wrexham. The area the school serves is a vibrant multi-cultural community.

There are 386 pupils aged three to 11 years in the school, including 55 part-time nursery children. Pupils are organised into 14 single or mixed age classes. Almost 42% of pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. No pupil speaks Welsh at home. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased over the last year to 8%. However, this is below the local authority and all-Wales average. The school has identified 13% of pupils with additional learning needs, including a very few pupils with statements of special educational needs. This is also below the local and all-Wales averages.

Since the last inspection in 2007, the senior management team has increased in size with the introduction of a new teaching and learning post. The current headteacher has been in post since 1997.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Mary's R.C. Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,069 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Wrexham is £10,422 and the minimum is £2,923. St Mary's R.C. Primary School is 52nd out of the 60 primary schools in Wrexham in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- most pupils make good progress from their starting point;
- pupils are keen to learn and they concentrate well;
- care for pupils and arrangements for their wellbeing are good;
- pupils with English as an additional language receive very good support and make good progress overall; and
- partnerships with parents, outside organisations and local schools are good.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the school is well managed;
- the headteacher and governors have a clear vision and they convey that vision clearly to staff, governors, pupils and parents;
- the headteacher has built an effective senior and middle management structure throughout the school;
- the governing body understands its role well and provides good support and challenge to school leaders;
- strong performance management systems help to raise standards effectively; and
- there is a strong sense of teamwork.

## Recommendations

R1 Improve outcomes for more able and talented pupils

R2 Ensure that targets for those pupils with additional learning needs focus on a wider range of learning strategies

R3 Differentiate lessons so that tasks meet the needs of all pupils

### What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

Pupils across the school achieve well and make good progress in acquiring a range of key skills. They are aware of the different skills they use in lessons and apply these confidently. Those pupils who learn English as an additional language are making consistent and good progress.

Many pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They respond accurately to teachers' questions and are confident to engage with one another in group situations. Most offer sensible ideas and suggestions during whole-class discussions.

Most pupils show a high level of competency in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). They apply these skills confidently to a range of activities such as carrying out a scientific investigation or producing their own music.

Pupils in all year groups read well in line with their abilities. In the Foundation Phase, pupils develop a good understanding of letters and sounds and are encouraged to enjoy reading. They are enthusiastic learners and by the time they reach the end of key stage 2 many are confident readers. They focus well in lessons and discuss issues confidently with each other.

Most pupils write well in a wide range of contexts as they develop as independent learners. As they move through the Foundation Phase, they write reasonably well in response to class stories and topics. By the time they reach Year 6 most pupils write in a range of styles for a variety of purposes. Pupils' handwriting skills improve considerably as they move through the school.

Most pupils make good progress in numeracy and they transfer these skills effectively to other subjects and areas of learning.

Nearly all pupils use Welsh well across a range of activities. They are making good progress and are confident in using the language on an incidental basis around the school.

Standards of attainment at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 are affected adversely over recent years by the large numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Nevertheless, pupils make significant progress when their current performance is compared to their on-entry assessment.

Pupils' attainment at the expected level (outcome 5) in the Foundation Phase in 2012, with the exception of personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, is generally in line with the performance of other schools in the same family, in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' outcomes at above the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity placed it in the highest 25% of similar schools. However, pupil outcomes in the other two areas of learning placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. The relative performance of

boys and girls generally reflects the national picture; boys achieve less well than girls. The exception is mathematical development, where boys consistently outperform girls.

In key stage 2, pupils' attainment at the expected level 4 for the last four years in English, mathematics and science has meant that the school has remained in the lower 50% of similar schools. In 2012, pupil performance in English and mathematics was below the family average but in science it was slightly above. Girls outperform the boys in mathematics and science at the expected levels. However, this trend is reversed when comparing more able pupils who have achieved the higher than expected level in mathematics and science.

Over time, pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional needs make good progress so that by the end of key stage 2 almost all achieve in line with their targets.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils have a good awareness of health issues and healthy living. They are encouraged to take regular exercise and eat healthy food. Nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe and secure in school. They develop effective relationships, are friendly and courteous to each other and are secure in the knowledge that they can approach adults if they have a problem.

The school promotes a strong sense of inclusion and belonging for all pupils regardless of their culture and background. Most pupils have acquired the necessary skills needed to improve their own learning and develop their thinking. This allows them to move onto the next stage of their learning successfully. Behaviour is good and nearly all pupils show confidence and respect to each other and have a positive attitude to their learning.

The school's average attendance rates over the last three years compare well with local authority, Wales and similar schools averages. Most pupils arrive at school on time.

The school council and eco committee are well established and they help make measurable improvements to the quality of school life for all pupils. Pupils' decisions make a positive contribution to school developments, such as the recent refurbishment of the pupils' toilets. Most pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility and make appropriate decisions on behalf of their fellow pupils.

Pupils actively and enthusiastically participate in a good range of activities within the local community. They show well-developed social and life skills.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
---	-------------

### **Learning experiences: Good**

The school offers a wide range of activities and experience that enable each pupil to receive a broad and balanced education. Planned activities create many opportunities for pupils to develop the key skills of literacy and numeracy appropriately in a variety of activities and lessons.

A range of extra-curricular activities linked to specific topics or themes enhance many activities effectively. These create a wealth of enrichment opportunities that provide valuable experiences for the pupils.

Planning to develop pupils' ICT skills is a strong feature. Skills are well developed through a range of interesting planned activities, which include the creation of animations and musical compositions.

There are consistently good opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. Most teachers encourage pupils to use Welsh throughout the day. This contributes well to the frequent use of incidental Welsh by pupils. A wide range of activities enables pupils to learn successfully about Welsh culture and heritage.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of many aspects of sustainability and global citizenship effectively. Visits to foreign countries and participation in local cultural activities add a wider global perspective to pupils' experiences and learning.

### **Teaching: Good**

Teachers have a good knowledge of all curriculum requirements. All teachers ask questions effectively and encourage pupils to think for themselves. Lessons have clear learning objectives and pupils' progress is monitored consistently against these objectives. Support staff work well with individuals and groups but do not always encourage pupils to talk sufficiently about what they are doing. Many lessons proceed at a lively pace and teachers use a suitable range of methods to stimulate the interest of pupils. However, in a few lessons, introductions are too long and learning tasks are not always adapted well to meet the needs of all abilities, especially the more able.

The school's assessment procedures are good. The progress of every pupil is tracked in detail. This ensures that all pupils have realistic targets that are monitored and updated. Marking comments in books and verbal feedback mean that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve. Teachers work well with staff from other schools to identify accurately levels of attainment within the National Curriculum.

Detailed annual reports and parents' evenings ensure that parents and carers are well informed about their child's progress.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is a caring, supporting and ordered community that values every pupil. This supportive atmosphere helps pupils to learn confidently and make good progress. Courtesy and respect are prominent qualities at the school and they are fostered daily by all members of staff. There are effective procedures to support pupils' health and wellbeing, as well as to encourage their involvement in their school and the wider community. The school provides well for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Teachers quickly identify pupils who have difficulties and produce specialised plans in order to aid their learning. These plans include targets for improvement and progress is regularly

monitored against these. However, the range of targets is too limited as they focus on a narrow range of reading skills and do not address important wider learning strategies.

Pupils' individual behaviour plans provide clear and specific strategies for improvement. The school makes effective use of external specialist agencies to provide further support.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school provides a welcoming, caring and supportive ethos where all pupils and staff are treated equally, fairly and with respect. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity within a multicultural community.

The accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils on roll and provides a colourful and stimulating learning environment. Good quality resources fully meet teaching and learning needs and these are utilised effectively. There are interesting displays and artwork that celebrate pupils' achievements. Outdoor areas provide good opportunities for learning. Foundation Phase staff use these areas effectively to support teaching and learning. Although the school has no grassed playing areas it has ready access to an adjacent park. All areas of the school are clean and well maintained.

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

### **Leadership: Good**

The headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision for the school and a strong determination to make this a reality. This vision is shared by staff and governors. All are committed to ensure that pupils do their best. The headteacher offers purposeful strategic direction for the life and work of the school. She has successfully implemented a strong management structure, which is well distributed. Other senior leaders direct the work of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 with imagination and vigour. These management strategies are having a positive influence on pupils' achievement and wellbeing. Performance management arrangements are good and contribute well to improvements in teaching and learning.

The quality of governance is good. Governors have an unswerving commitment to ensure a high quality of education for all pupils. They are kept well informed through regular governors' meetings, learning walks in school and discussions with subject co-ordinators. Their thorough knowledge of the school's work enables them to challenge and support managers in their drive to improve quality and standards. Nearly all governors are increasingly aware of how pupils' performance compares with the performance of pupils in other similar schools.

Local and national initiatives are developing well and contribute positively to raising standards.

### **Improving quality: Good**

There is a thorough process for self-evaluation. The school seeks and listens to the views of parents, pupils and the local authority. Data is analysed in great detail to



track the progress of the different groups of pupils. Every teacher has a whole-school leadership role. These roles ensure that staff have a whole-school perspective and experience of development planning. Teachers are, as a result, skilled and experienced evaluators. This enables them to make accurate judgements on standards of pupils' achievements

Self-evaluation outcomes determine appropriate priorities for school improvement. School improvement planning is of high quality. The school improvement plan has only four priorities. All are pertinent. Over the years, these plans have spearheaded improvements in major aspects of provision. Boys, for example, are now becoming interested readers following the purchase of new reading materials, which appeal to their imaginations. Action plans for the key stages and for individual subjects supplement the main plan. They are concise, clear and well monitored and evaluated and inform the self-evaluation report effectively.

Staff benefit from professional development opportunities, which have helped raise standards. The local authority Foundation Phase courses are a good example of this. The school participates successfully in a variety of professional networks with other schools and partners. This has a positive impact on pupils' education.

### **Partnership working: Good**

A wealth of partnerships enhance the quality of the curriculum and pupils' learning experiences. The link with the diocese helps foster a strong family atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and free to enjoy their learning. Exchanges with the Culture Centre in Racibórz (the Polish town twinned with Wrexham) greatly enrich pupils' appreciation of different cultures and aspects of citizenship. Pupils' skills in sports and the arts develop effectively through a range of specialist tuition.

Well-established transition arrangements with the local cluster of schools help teachers to become confident in assessing pupils' work accurately and they ease pupils' transfer to secondary school. Local businesses support an entrepreneurship week and this raises pupils' awareness of the world of work. The Friends' Association raises around £6,000 annually for the school. This money contributes substantially to investment in outdoor learning equipment and extra-curricular sports equipment. Recent spending on ICT equipment has had a positive impact on pupils' ICT skills throughout the school.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school's manages its resources well, in line with the priorities set by governors. The school's management structure is highly effective and teachers' non-teaching time is particularly well used. Staff make the most of their particular areas of expertise to support improvements in learning. The school accommodation is well ordered and managed. Staff provide attractive and safe environment for pupils' learning. Teaching and non-teaching staff are appropriately qualified and are deployed effectively.

The school manages its finances rigorously and targets spending carefully at identified priorities. Governors plan an annual surplus of funds in line with national guidelines. Overall, the school uses its teaching resources well, particularly in ICT. The school offers good value for money in terms of the standards achieved by the pupils.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Standards of attainment at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, are affected adversely over recent years by the large numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Nevertheless, pupils make significant progress when their current performance is compared to their on entry assessment.

Pupils' performance in the Foundation Phase outcome indicator in 2012 (the expected outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity) is slightly above family averages. Pupils' performance in the individual areas of learning at the expected outcome and above (outcome 6) is more mixed. Pupils' attainment in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural development is considerably better than the family averages. Outcomes in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development at the expected level are comparable to family averages. The school does significantly better than other schools in the proportion of more able pupils attaining above the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Language, literacy and communication skills are the weakest area of learning with more able pupils attaining below the levels attained by pupils in other schools in the same family.

In 2012, when compared to the performance of pupils in schools in similar circumstances across Wales, pupils' outcomes in the Foundation Phase at the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, were in the highest 25%. Pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication skills together with mathematical development placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. The performance of more able pupils at above the expected level in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity placed it in the highest 25% of similar schools. However, the performance of more able pupils in the other two areas of learning placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. Girls outperformed boys at the expected level in literacy and personal and social development. But boys outperformed girls in mathematical development.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance over time in the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, is lower than family but slightly higher than the local and national averages. This shows an improvement on the previous year but results over time fluctuate. Standards at the expected level 4 in English and mathematics are slightly lower than the family average and broadly similar to the local and national averages. In science the school performs above family, local and national averages. More able pupils' performance at the higher level 5 in each core subject is generally below family averages. Gender performance is variable but girls usually outperform boys in English at the expected level. However, boys' performance is particularly strong in science and mathematics at the higher level.

In 2012, when compared to performance levels in schools in similar circumstances across Wales, pupil outcomes in key stage 2 at the expected level placed the school

amongst the lowest 25% for English and mathematics and in the lower 50% of schools for science. Pupils' results above the expected level did not compare well with those of similar schools and placed the school in the lowest 25% for English and mathematics and in the higher 50% for science. Trends over time show that pupils' attainment at the expected level for the last four years in English, mathematics and science has remained in the lower 50% of that for similar schools.

Pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional needs make good progress. By the end of key stage 2, almost all achieve in line with their targets.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

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

Twenty-four parents completed the questionnaire. Responses were slightly higher than national norms overall.

All parents say that:

- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child likes school;
- teaching is good;
- staff expect pupils to work hard and to do their best;
- staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems;
- their child is helped to become more mature and responsible;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next stage of his/her education;
- their child was helped to settle in well when starting school;
- there is a good range of activities and trips provided; and
- the school is well run.

Nearly all parents say that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child makes good progress;
- they understand the procedures for dealing with complaints;
- homework builds well on what is learnt in school; and
- appropriate additional support is provided, if necessary.

Most parents say that:

- pupils behave well in school; and
- their child is safe in school.

Many parents say that:

- they are kept well informed about their child's progress.

### **Responses to learner questionnaires**

One hundred and one pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. All their responses were better than national norms.

All pupils say they that they:

- know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- feel safe in school;
- feel that the school deals well with any bullying;
- have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- know whom to ask if they find work hard;
- are helped to learn and to make progress; and
- have enough books and equipment.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they are doing well at school;
- they learn how to keep healthy;
- they think homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school;
- pupils behave well in class so they can get their work done; and
- nearly all pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time.

## **Appendix 3**

### **The inspection team**

Peter Anthony Roach	Reporting Inspector
Ian Garth Higginbotham	Team Inspector
William Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
James Kerry Jones	Lay Inspector
Andrew Jones	Peer Inspector
Kathleen Jones	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.