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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**St Nicholas C.I.W. Primary School
St Nicholas
Vale of Glamorgan
CF5 6SG**

Date of inspection: October 2011

by

Mr Peter Mathias

for

**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:

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

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

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Context

St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School is situated in a village of the same name in the Vale of Glamorgan, which is the local authority (LA). The school is close to the western suburbs of Cardiff, where 76% of pupils live. There are 114 pupils on roll, of whom 16 are of reception age. The school roll has increased slightly since the time of the last inspection, which took place in the autumn term 2005. The school is on two sites a short distance apart. The original Victorian school building is used by pupils in the early part of the Foundation Phase. The remainder are accommodated in a newer building opened in the late 1960s.

On entry, levels of basic skills vary considerably and on average are below those expected and found amongst pupils of this age. The school has a high level of pupil mobility with about 55% of the population either joining or leaving the school at times other than normal.

Pupils generally come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, however, figures suggest that only 13% of pupils are considered to be entitled to free school meals. This is below local and national averages.

All pupils have English as a first language and no pupil has Welsh as the language of the home. Nearly all are from white, British backgrounds. Thirty-two pupils (28%) are identified as having additional learning needs (ALN). This is a figure higher than the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Five pupils are looked after by the LA. No pupil was excluded in the previous school year.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School is £3,241 which compares with a maximum of £3,491 and a minimum of £2,756 for primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The school has the third highest budget out of the 46 primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The school is good because:

- nearly all pupils make good progress, often from below expected starting points;
- the school has a very supportive and caring ethos;
- the leadership of the school is good;
- early support for ALN is effective and well organised; and
- pupils are well behaved and work hard.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- there has been good progress in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection;
- there is careful analysis of assessment information in order to raise standards;
- the school's self-evaluation report is accurate and correctly identifies the school's strengths and areas for development; and
- the governing body and senior management team work closely together and share a strong, commitment to addressing the future needs of the school.

Recommendations

In order to improve further St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School needs to:

- R1 strengthen teachers' confidence in the use of information and communication technology in order to raise standards further;
- R2 have higher expectations of what the more able in the Foundation Phase should achieve, particularly in reading and mathematics;
- R3 continue to develop assessment procedures in the Foundation Phase, in order to involve children more in assessing their own learning; and
- R4 take steps to improve outdoor provision in the Foundation Phase and in the hard play area in key stage 2.

What happens next?

St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Standards in speaking, listening and writing are good. A recent major initiative to improve writing has had a positive impact on standards. Reading skills are good and pupils make good use of their knowledge of the sounds letters make to read new words. From a low baseline in the Foundation Phase, by the end of key stage 2 most pupils develop a good level of fluency and read increasingly complex texts.

Standards in numeracy are good and most pupils apply their skills well across the curriculum. The standards achieved by more able and talented pupils in the Foundation Phase are not always high enough in literacy and numeracy. Standards in information and communication technology are adequate; skills are not fully utilised to extend learning across the curriculum in all classes.

Over the last four years results in the national teacher assessments for seven year olds have been broadly in line with schools locally and nationally and pupils have made good progress. However, when compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils with free school meals, the results have been below average. The school's performance is also generally just below the majority of schools in the family to which it belongs.

Since 2009 standards in key stage 1 have improved at the same rate as most schools locally and nationally. While girls slightly outperform boys in some areas, boys perform better than girls in others. There is no clear pattern.

The results at the end of key stage 2 over the last four years show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 4 in English and mathematics has been close to local and national averages and above in science. In 2011 the school was seventh in its family of schools in English and fifth in mathematics and science. When the results in 2011 are compared to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals, the results were low in English, above the average in mathematics and well above in science.

In 2011 the results at level 4 in English and mathematics were in line with those of the previous year and above in science. Results at the higher level 5 were in line with national averages, but below local and family averages in English and mathematics and below these averages in science. In these assessments, as previously, there was no significant variation of boys compared to girls. Overall, pupils with free school meals achieve well.

Standards in Welsh language development are good. Many pupils develop good pronunciation and tone. They respond well to a range of texts and many reach expected standards by the end of key stage 2.

Wellbeing: Good

The wellbeing of all pupils in the school is good. Health issues are given a high priority and pupils fully understand what they need to do to stay healthy.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate fully in lessons. Attendance levels are good and above the national averages; the upward trend is in line with the local family of schools. There is very little lateness and lessons start on time.

Pupils are well behaved and work hard.

The school council meets regularly, takes on responsibility and is actively engaged in the life and work of the school. Members have a significant role in decision-making.

Pupils are very respectful of their peers and show care and concern for each other.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It has recently been thoroughly reviewed to reflect an emphasis on developing the skills for learning systematically. Themes of study are carefully organised on a two-year cycle to address the difficulties associated with planning for mixed-age classes.

The needs of all pupils are met, including those in need of additional support in reading. A strong feature is planning for a 'values' curriculum, which permeates the physical and social education provision.

There are well-used skills organisers for the systematic development of pupils' skills in learning.

The very recently purchased laptops have enabled the school to provide better opportunities to use information and communication technology to support learning. However, these are currently underdeveloped.

The school provides a good range of after school clubs and activities, which are well organised and well attended by pupils. They enhance and enrich the formal curriculum and have a positive impact on pupils' social skills.

Provision for Welsh language development is good. Welsh is taught in all classes and sufficient time is allocated to ensure good progress. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning Welsh and most reach expected levels by the end of key stage 2.

Well-established arrangements ensure Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is successfully integrated into themes and topics and pupils develop a good knowledge of the history and culture of Wales.

Education for sustainable development is good. Pupils are eager to recycle and know the importance of conserving resources. However, there is little provision for all pupils to understand the needs and conditions of those in less well-developed countries.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers in the Foundation Phase have a good understanding of how to provide for pupils of this age and to ensure that their learning is based around rich practical experiences. They successfully promote pupils' independence and social skills.

Teachers have very positive and constructive relationships with their pupils, who work willingly and enthusiastically, because they know that their contributions are valued..

In many lessons teachers have very good subject knowledge and pass this on to their pupils effectively, for example when looking at Victorian artefacts. They encourage all pupils to find things out for themselves and, as a result, nearly all of them achieve well.

Resources are carefully matched to the needs of all pupils. These are well used to stimulate pupils' interest. Where there are shortcomings, teaching lacks pace and expectations of what should be achieved are not made clear. Work is not always matched to the needs of pupils. In a minority of lessons teachers do not have sufficient confidence to take up opportunities to use information and communications technology effectively.

The school makes good use of appropriate data to identify and track individual pupils' progress. Good use is made of assessment information to pinpoint exact issues and to spot trends in underperformance; priorities are rigorously identified. Teachers and support staff work closely together to discuss the progress of individual pupils and then plan appropriately.

Teachers of younger pupils provide constructive oral feedback, but do not give sufficient encouragement to them to realise how they might improve their work. In key stage 1 and key stage 2 marking is consistent and provides pupils with appropriate detailed advice and encouragement in order to build up their understanding of what they need to achieve.

Reports to parents and carers are clear and informative, most of whom feel adequately informed about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is good provision for all aspects of health and safety. The anti-bullying and anti-cyber bullying policies are detailed and particularly well set. The school deals with any bullying immediately and in a positive way. It successfully promotes good behaviour and pupils enjoy being in school.

The school actively promotes pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an effective physical and social education policy and pastoral care system. The emphasis on values contributes to the calm ethos

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

There is effective and thoughtful provision for pupils with ALN. Pupils' individual education plans have targets, which are reviewed regularly and updated. There are well-organised interventions to assist with specific needs and procedures to identify pupils likely to need support. Parents of those with ALN are kept well informed of their children's progress. Provision for the more able and talented pupils is good in key stage 2. However, in the Foundation Phase expectations of these pupils are not sufficiently high enough.

The school works well in partnership with a wide range of external agencies and specialist services to ensure that all pupils' needs are met.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a warm, caring, family ethos; it promotes inclusion and all staff work hard to ensure equal opportunities. The school successfully identifies and celebrates the diversity of pupils' backgrounds with a strong emphasis on tolerance. Policies

and procedures promote good race relations and the school meets its duties under the Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts.

The main building is in a good condition, but space within the school is very limited. The accommodation is generally well used to maximise teaching and learning. Colourful displays effectively enhance the environment. .

In the main school the toilets are modern and well decorated; however, there is a lack of adequate ventilation in one of the boys' toilets.

The lower building is adequate, but the playground is not sufficiently stimulating or exciting.

The exterior facilities, particularly the quiet garden, the school sports field and the woodland area are very good features and are very well used to improve teaching and learning. However, the main playground is somewhat uneven and the surface is loose.

There are generally sufficient good quality resources to teach all subjects of the NC. However, the school has only very recently improved its provision for ICT.

The library is well stocked, but also doubles up as a teaching base. There is limited space for pupils to use books to research or to browse and read.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The school is purposefully led by a headteacher who is focused on raising standards and continuing to improve the quality of learning. Much has been achieved in evaluating very rigorously the information the school assembles on pupils' standards of attainment. This is used effectively to determine educational priorities and to establish the longer-term strategic direction for the school.

The headteacher has very successfully developed a committed senior management team, which plays a full part in planning the way ahead and in working with other teachers to ensure that the school provides well for its pupils.

Links with the governing body are strong, the chair of governors is very well informed and works closely with the headteacher to address the needs of the school and to effect change.

Governors are regular visitors to the school and play a full part in its life. They constructively hold the senior management team to account.

The school has made good progress in addressing local and national priorities.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation process is robust and reflects a whole-school approach. Staff and governors use a wide range of appropriate evidence, including subject

evaluations, through monitoring procedures, analysis of data on pupil performance, lesson observations and scrutiny of work.

Pupils' views are sought through the work of the school council. A collaborative culture, which includes the views of other stakeholders, has been established to improve provision and performance. This results in the school having an accurate assessment of its strengths and areas for development.

There are well-established initiatives to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects and effective processes for subject leaders to improve provision systematically. The information acquired is well used to plan and provide training and support on an individual and whole-school basis.

Subject development plans are monitored against clear targets and lead into whole-school improvement plans. This ensures a good link between self-evaluation processes and priorities for improvement in the school development plan. Progress is regularly monitored and evaluated by the staff team.

All recommendations from the previous inspection have been properly addressed.

Staff have been involved in a number of external professional learning communities focusing on assessment for learning and literacy.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well with parents and carers and uses modern technology to keep them informed of school activities and events. The breakfast club, after school activities and mini-bus service all help to support families. Links are well established with a number of local pre-school settings and there are effective procedures to ease pupils into school.

Effective links with local schools ensure that teachers share experiences and best practice. The headteacher also has links with other Church in Wales schools in a wider area.

Strong links exist with Dyffryn House, which provides free entry to pupils of the school for specific school arranged activities and events. Good use is made of Dyffryn Gardens to enhance the curriculum. Links with a local bank have been successful in supporting enterprise projects.

The school works well with a range of agencies and organisations to support pupils' learning and wellbeing.

The school provides placements and successfully mentors trainee teachers and childcare students at various levels.

The school has very good links with the receiving secondary school and recent initiatives have strengthened this partnership. Arrangements to agree the end of key stage 2 teacher assessments are well established and serve to confirm the school's judgements.

Resource management: Good

The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers to cover all classes. Support staff are also suitably experienced and qualified and appropriately trained; they are deployed effectively to deliver targeted support.

All staff have access to on-going training linked to school priorities, personal targets and areas for improvement in the school development plan.

Arrangements to provide time for teachers to plan, prepare and make assessments are well organised and effective use is made of the time provided. The school clerk ensures the smooth running of the school's administrative procedures. Not all teachers are currently confident in the use of the new computer resources.

The governing body and headteacher monitor the budget carefully. Careful consideration is given to priorities identified in the school development plan and funding is targeted appropriately. In view of the good progress made by the majority of pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Pupils begin school with levels of basic skills and maturity which are often below those expected and found amongst pupils of this age.

At the end of key stage 1, over the last four years, the proportion of pupils reaching level 2 (the expected level in English and mathematics) was close to local and national averages; in science results were above. The results have been below most schools in the family across Wales, but they match its anticipated position in the family. When these results are compared to schools with a similar proportion entitled to free school meals, the results in 2011 were low in English and below the average in mathematics, but well above in science; the combined results were below. These results reflect the high proportion of pupils in the group who had been identified as having ALN. Other reliable data which the school assembles indicates that these pupils make good progress.

There was no significant variation in the performance of boys compared to girls. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 3 in all three subjects was low.

The results at the end of key stage 2 over the last four years show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 4 in English and mathematics has been close to local and national averages and above in science. In 2011 the school was seventh in its family of schools in English and fifth in mathematics and science. The combined results placed the school in seventh place; this matched the school's relative degree of challenge when compared to other schools in the family. When the results in 2011 are compared to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals, the results were low in English, above the average in mathematics and well above in science. The combined results were below.

In 2011 the results at level 4 in English and mathematics were in line with those of the previous year and above in science. The combined results were lower.

Results at the higher level 5 were in line with national averages but below local and family averages in English and mathematics and below these averages in science. The combined results at this level were below.

In these assessments, as previously, there was no significant variation of boys compared to girls. In 2011 there were no pupils in receipt of free school meals who took part in the assessments. In the previous year pupils with free school meals outperformed those who did not receive them. Overall, pupils with free school meals achieve well. However, those identified as more able and talented do not always make the expected progress by the age of seven.

The standards of work in pupils' books and found in classroom observations confirm the results in the national teacher assessments of seven and eleven year olds.

Over time, nearly all pupils who enter the school in the reception class and remain until they transfer to secondary education make good progress and often exceed expectations set for them.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-five parents completed the questionnaire. Many had positive views of the school. All agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the school, thought that their children liked school and were helped to settle in well on entry.

All agreed that their children were making good progress at school. They thought pupils behaved well in school. All thought that the teaching was good and that staff expected their children to work hard and to do their best. Staff treated all children fairly and with respect.

All parents who responded thought that their children were encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. They felt that their children were safe in school. All were comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and understood the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. They felt that there was a good range of activities, trip and visits. All felt that the school was well run.

A very few were concerned about pupils' behaviour, staff expectations of their children, homework, the additional support provided, the information they received about their children's progress and the way the school helped their children to become mature and to be prepared for secondary school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-seven pupils completed the questionnaire. Nearly all had positive views of many of the questions they were asked. Nearly all felt safe in school, that the school dealt with bullying well and taught them to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

All but a very few thought they were doing well in school and that teachers and other adults helped them to learn and to make progress.

Nearly all knew what to do and who to ask if they found the work hard, thought that their homework was helpful and they had enough books, equipment and computers.

A minority thought that other children did not behave well, hindered their progress and were badly behaved at playtime and lunchtime.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mr Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Gill Harrison	Team Inspector
Mrs Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Mrs Justine Baldwin	Peer Inspector
Mr Robert Williams	School Nominee