



A report on

**St Michael's RC Primary School
Baldwin Close
Newport
NP20 2LW**

Date of inspection: July 2011

by

Mr Stephen Dennett

Under Contract 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 Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School is situated in dockland areas of Pillgwenlly near the city centre of Newport. The majority of pupils are from the surrounding locality, which the school describes as economically disadvantaged and has been designated a 'Community First' area.

There are currently 189 pupils on roll aged four to 11. Around 27% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. No pupils are looked after by the local authority (LA). Approximately 24% of the pupils have additional learning needs (ALN) and 3 have statements of special educational need (SEN). English is the home language of the majority of pupils and no pupils are fluent in Welsh. Around 25% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 36% speak English as an additional language. Three pupils have been placed on fixed term exclusions in the past year. Since the school's last inspection in July 2005, the number on roll has risen and there has been a change of headteacher.

The 2010–2011 individual school budget per pupil for St Michael's RC Primary School is £3,196 that compares with a maximum of £6,996 and a minimum of £2,612 for primary schools in Newport. The school has the 27th highest budget per pupil out of the 48 primary schools in Newport.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the provider is good because:

- Pupils make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills and by the time they leave in Year 6 standards are high.
- Pupils' wellbeing and behaviour are good.
- Pupils are involved in the planning and running of their own clubs, which has a positive effect on their engagement in learning.
- Teaching is generally good.
- The care, support and guidance of pupils are strong and provision for their emotional wellbeing is particularly good.
- Leadership and management are good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

Prospects for improvement

The school has good prospects for improvement because:

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear picture of the school's performance, its strengths and areas for development.
- There is a strong educational direction to the work of the school.
- The school's development plans are well focused and set out aspects that need development clearly.
- Effective use is made of assessment information to set targets for improvement and identify groups of pupils that are underperforming.
- The actions taken by the school to raise standards have led to measurable improvement at both key stages.
- Most of the issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed appropriately.

Recommendations

In order to further improve provision and raise standards, the school should:

- R1 Further raise the standards of more able pupils at key stage 1, especially in writing.
- R2 Improve the use of pupils' Welsh language skills across the curriculum and their understanding and appreciations of the Welsh dimension.
- R3 Build on the best practice in the school and improve the consistency of teaching and the use of assessment to ensure that tasks are well matched to the needs of all pupils and that work is sufficiently challenging for the most able.

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 the 2010 teachers' assessments, standard at key stage 1 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were below the 'family', LA and national averages. Compared to similar schools standards were in the lowest 25% for all subjects. Standards declined between 2008 and 2010. At key stage 2, standards in core subjects were above the 'family', LA and national averages. Compared to similar schools standards were in the top 25% for English and science, and in the top 50% for mathematics and all three subjects combined. The overall trend was broadly upwards between 2008 and 2010. Apart from science in Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels was below the 'family', LA and national averages.

The school's assessments for 2011 show that standard have improved at key stage 1 and are now generally above most indicators for all subjects at the end of Year 2. Standards at the end of key stage 2 are high and pupils make good progress in their learning. Current work in books and lessons confirm good standards and progress. Many pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards achieving their specific individual targets.

Nearly all pupils use their speaking skills well in lessons when explaining their investigation in mathematics, for example. Their reading skills are good and they use them effectively when reading aloud in class. Most pupils apply their writing skills well to write a prospectus for an imaginary camp and standards of handwriting and presentation are generally good. However, occasionally, more able pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable at key stage 1, because work is not sufficiently challenging, especially in writing. Nearly all pupils apply their numeracy skills well when solving calculations with several steps, for example. Pupils make effective use of their information and communication technology skills when researching logos for their own product as part of a 'Young Enterprise' project, for example. Many pupils have well developed thinking skills and this is having a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. They apply these well in a range of situations, such as in science, and they are well equipped for the next phase of their education. Many pupils respond appropriately to basic incidental Welsh. However, they do not make sufficient progress in their standards of speaking Welsh as they move through the key stages.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' wellbeing is good. Most pupils feel safe and secure in school. They enjoy coming to school and participate eagerly in lessons. Through discussions and sharing ideas, they show a positive attitude towards learning. Behaviour in school is good and pupils show respect and care for one another. Where pupils indicate instances of poor behaviour, most state that the school deals effectively with them.

Most pupils show good awareness of health and safety issues. They have a good understanding of healthy eating, the importance of a balanced diet, and take part enthusiastically in a range of after school and lunch time clubs. The current

attendance figure of 93.3% is above the LA and all Wales figures. Pupils' punctuality is good.

Members of the school council are actively involved in making decisions and represent the views of pupils well. They are working productively with local organisations to plan ways of improving the surrounding environment in their community. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in sports clubs, which help them develop good social and life skills.

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

The school meets the needs of nearly all pupils well. It provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and coherent, which is based on the national curriculum. Lessons are for the most part planned to include a range of tasks which provide a good level of challenge for most pupils. However, in a few lessons at key stage 1 there is not sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Most pupils benefit from good learning experiences and a worthwhile range of extra-curricular activities enhances their learning. An excellent feature of the enriched curriculum is the way in which the pupils themselves organise their own clubs and activities; this greatly enhances their sense of 'ownership' of the learning process.

The development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is planned well to ensure a clear progression throughout the school. Teachers explain clearly in most lessons which skills will be taught and how pupils may know that they have achieved them. Where pupils have learning difficulties, relevant intervention programmes are in place to address the issue promptly and effectively.

The majority of pupils respond appropriately to instructions given in Welsh but have limited opportunities to use incidental Welsh across the school. Pupils also have insufficient opportunities to learn about the Welsh dimension.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is a clear feature of each curriculum topic. The eco committee are proactive in promoting a wide range of initiatives and members take their responsibilities seriously. Activities, such as the Gardening Club, provide pupils with excellent opportunities to consider ecological issues. Global citizenship is developed well through the topics pupils are studying in geography and religious education.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching in the school is generally good, although there is inconsistency in quality between classes. Most teachers plan lessons effectively to ensure the development of pupils' skills, understanding and knowledge. The pace of most lessons is brisk and they are well structured to provide opportunities for individual, paired and group activities. However, a few introductions are over long and fail to engage all pupils in learning. Behaviour management is secure and ensures that all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Working relationships between teaching and support staff and pupils are good. Learning resources are used effectively, although occasionally opportunities for pupils to use interactive whiteboards are missed. Teachers use stimulating questioning well in

introductory and plenary sessions and this develops and extends pupils' learning effectively. Teaching assistants work together with teachers very well and make a valuable contribution to all pupils' development.

The school has effective policies and procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and for reporting to parents. In the best examples, marking makes good use of constructive comments to help pupils understand how to improve their work. However, there is inconsistency in marking and in a few books it merely consists of ticks and supportive comments. Pupils' assessment of their own work and others' is beginning to be established, but in a few classes, pupils are unsure of what they need to do to improve their work. 'Assessment for learning' strategies are beginning to be used well but this is still inconsistent. Annual reports to parents/carers give clear judgements about their children's achievements but do not always provide an indication of how they could improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's policies and arrangements for promoting healthy living and wellbeing are good. Pupils take part in a range of activities designed to promote personal fitness and have a good awareness of healthy eating. School rules and procedures help to ensure a safe and secure environment in which effectively promotes good standards of learning and wellbeing. The school also has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect and collective worship successfully promotes their spiritual development. However, there is insufficient promotion of pupils' Welsh cultural development. The school gives good guidance in respect of pupils' personal and social education development, with a strong emphasis given to the promotion of social and emotional wellbeing.

The school makes good use of specialist services to provide relevant information and guidance, especially for pupils with additional needs. Pupils who learn English as an additional language also receive good support. There is an effective transition arrangement to the local Catholic secondary school.

The school has effective procedures for identifying and addressing pupils' additional learning needs. Pupils' progress is formally recorded, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Pupils' individual education plans are clear and specific. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils on an individual basis in order to achieve their targets. Parents/carers are kept well informed and are fully involved in the reviews.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community with a very positive ethos. Pupils are valued and have equal access to all areas of provision including the good range of extra-curricular clubs. The well focused policies and procedures contribute effectively to the promotion of equality of opportunity and awareness. Diversity is promoted and celebrated effectively through the personal and social education programme, religious education visits and visitors to the school. Good behaviour and good relationships are effectively promoted and is evident between pupils and staff. Staff

work hard to ensure a positive learning environment where there are high expectations of pupils whose efforts are acknowledged and celebrated.

The accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils. The school offers a safe and secure learning environment for pupils to learn and play. The school building is in good repair and well maintained with some very pleasant outside quiet areas for pupils. The school is accessible for potential pupils and visitors with disabilities.

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

The headteacher has clear priorities for development and there is an effective strategic direction to the work of the school. She has been successful in distributing leadership and she extended the shared ownership of key objectives. Supported by her senior leaders, she consistently implements policies and initiatives that address local as well as national priorities. This is particularly evident in the way the Foundation Phase has been introduced. The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations well. They are aware of the school's priorities and provide good support for the school, although the level of challenge is sometimes not as vigorous as it should be. Through regular monitoring and detailed analysis of data, senior leaders develop a clear idea of areas for development. Plans are appropriately focused and generate actions which communicate high expectations. The process of using data to set and monitor targets is becoming well established across all phases and is beginning to generate useful discussions about standards amongst staff and governors.

Improving quality: Good

The school has good systems for evaluating its performance and monitoring initiatives to raise standards. The self-evaluation report takes good account of performance related data and planning for improvement is based on the outcomes of self-evaluation, drawing on first hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning well and her evaluations clearly identify areas for improvement. The school's involvement with professional learning communities is having a positive effect on pupils' standards in reading as well as on behaviour. Standards have risen this year at both key stages because of the focus on improving assessment and targeting groups of pupils who had fallen behind in their learning. The school has dealt appropriately with most of the recommendations from the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school's strategic partnerships are good and help improve overall provision and raise standards. Partnerships with parents are good. Nearly all parents have confidence in the school and its clear commitment to raising standards and making good provision for their children's wellbeing. A notable success has been the creation of a weekly parent and child reading group that has emerged as a result of a professional learning community focus on reading. The school enjoys productive community partnerships as well. This is shown by its strong links with the initial teacher training institute, community police, the local church and the 'Communities First' project leader. The school's transition plan meets the needs of pupils well and

supports continuity in provision. The plan also gives good opportunities for staff to share in professional learning networks between cluster schools, focusing on moderation of work and the development of pupils' skills.

Resource management: Good

Resources are good and managed effectively to support the learning environment. Staff expertise and experience are deployed effectively to cover the curriculum. Support staff are utilised well in implementing intervention programmes which is beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards. Planning, preparation and assessment time is planned and managed well to provide pupils with specific learning experiences. The school also has taken account of the workload agreement when drawing up staff job descriptions. Well established procedures help ensure that resources are allocated to meet priorities successfully and ensure effective learning experiences for pupils. The recent purchase of mini laptops as part of the upgrade of the information technology provision has provided a more accessible resource for pupils to use independently.

Working closely with the headteacher, and the local authority finance officer, the finance committee of the governing body meets regularly to ensure that spending is planned and monitored effectively. The school gives good value for money in terms of pupils' outcomes and in its use of funding.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty-four parents/carers returned questionnaires. Nearly all agreed that their children liked school and that teaching was good. They also nearly all agreed that their children were helped to settle in when they started school and that behaviour was good. All parents/carers agreed that their children made good progress. A few parents/carers disagreed that pupils were well behaved in school or that homework built well on what their children learned in school. Nearly all parents/carers agreed that the school was well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

There were eighty-two questionnaires returned by pupils. Most pupils agree that they feel safe in school. Nearly all agree that the school teaches them to keep healthy and there are plenty of opportunities to take regular exercise. All pupils agree that their teachers help them make progress and they know who to ask if they find work difficult. A majority of pupils disagreed that behaviour in the school was good and that they could get on with their work in class. A small minority said they thought homework did not help improve their work at school or that they had sufficient resources. Nearly all pupils said they knew who to go to if they were worried or upset.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Stephen Dennett	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Helen Adams	Lay Inspector
Ruth Davies	Peer Inspector
Helen Quigley	School Nominee

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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