



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 Gabriel's R.C. Primary School
Ringland Circle
Newport
NP19 9PQ**

Date of inspection: September 2011

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:

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 Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School caters for pupils between 4 and 11 years of age. It is situated in Ringland, a large local authority housing estate on the eastern fringe of the City of Newport. The school's catchment area is the Parish of St Gabriel's, which includes both private and local authority housing; however, the majority of pupils are from the Ringland and Always estates.

There are currently 130 pupils on roll and they are organised into five classes, two of which are mixed-age classes. The number on roll has been rising for the past five years. Pupils take up full-time placement in the reception class in the September following their fourth birthdays with most pupils having attended nursery provision on the school site.

English is the home language of nearly all pupils. No pupils speak Welsh as their home language and a very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Fifteen per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the local authority and all-Wales average. The school identifies 21% of pupils as having additional learning needs (ALN), which is slightly below the local authority and all-Wales average.

At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher of the school.

During the inspection, religious education and collective worship were inspected separately, complying with Section 50 of the 2005 Education Act.

The individual school budget for St Gabriel's R.C. Primary School in 2011-2012 is £3,140 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Newport is £7,916 and the minimum is £2,647. St Gabriel's R.C. Primary School is the 19th out of the 48 primary schools in Newport in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- pupils at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 have achieved well when compared to pupils in similar schools;
- pupils display enthusiasm and pride in their school;
- the curriculum is well planned and offers a good range of interesting learning experiences that successfully meet the needs of most pupils;
- most teaching engages learners well and ensures good pupil progress; and
- the school's values and ethos are reflected in all aspects of its work.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement of the school are good because:

- the senior management team has a clear sense of direction;
- the governing body contributes effectively to the school's self evaluation process and provides appropriate challenge to the resulting improvement plans;
- the school has a clear commitment to promoting improvement and self-evaluation procedures identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately;
- the school has generally made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection; and
- the school has forged strong links with parents which has helped to raise standards.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards in Welsh second language;
- R2 ensure that teaching is sufficiently differentiated to better match the needs of all pupils, including the more able;
- R3 ensure that assessment for learning strategies are embedded in the day-to-day work of the school; and
- R4 ensure that the ongoing actions in the school's improvement plans are appropriately monitored and evaluated to secure the improvements identified in the self-evaluation.

What happens next?

St Gabriel's R.C. Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Over recent years, pupils at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 have achieved well when compared to pupils in similar schools. Most pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Examination of pupils' work and data on their attainments during the last academic year show that most made good progress during the Foundation Phase and achieved well at the end of key stage 1. There was some inconsistency in the progress pupils made during key stage 2. However, by the end of this phase of their education, most pupils achieved well in relation to their starting points. Almost without exception, parents are happy with the progress that their children make in school and feel that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Analysis of data on pupils' performance over the last three years and findings from the inspection show that different groups of learners generally achieve equally well. Where there are some differences, such as in the relative performance of boys and girls, these either reflect national trends or relate to small cohorts of pupils and are not significant. There are no significant differences between the progress of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Most pupils with ALN make good progress in relation to their starting points and abilities and achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Nearly all pupils who receive extra help from the school's intervention programmes for literacy and numeracy make good progress.

Pupils make good progress in using their communication skills for a range of purposes in their work across the curriculum. Throughout the school, most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and respond to questions with increasing confidence. Many pupils work well with 'talk partners' in lessons to share and discuss ideas. Most pupils speak confidently in role-play situations. For example, children in Year 1 enthusiastically act as reporters using microphones to interview people about the appearance of the wolf in the 'Three Little Pigs' story.

Pupils' skills in reading both for pleasure and for information are developing well. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils use a good range of strategies to understand the text. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read fluently, with expression and understanding. In Year 5 and Year 6, for example, pupils of all abilities enjoy reading in groups under the guidance of their teacher. They recall what they have previously read in a story and use a good range of clues to make judgements about a character. Nearly all pupils competently navigate a website to read information about Hurricane Katrina and make brief notes. The dictionary skills of a minority of pupils in lower key stage 2 are not developed enough for them quickly to locate longer words and understand some of their synonyms.

Most pupils in the Foundation Phase use their writing skills effectively in a good variety of ways to record their thoughts and feelings about the topics they study. More able children in Year 1, for example, write a character's speech on a recordable whiteboard using good letter formation that is well spaced and apply their phonic knowledge well in order to spell words independently. In history lessons in Year 2 and Year 3, they write thoughtful letters to their parents about their feelings as 'evacuees' in the Second World War and prepare pertinent questions to ask a visitor. By the end of key stage 2, all pupils write in a good range of genres for a variety of purposes and audiences. Most pupils present their work well. Their writing is particularly effective when they write for a real audience, such as to children in a school in Africa that their teacher has visited.

Throughout the school, pupils are making good progress in developing their thinking skills, but their creativity and problem-solving skills are less well developed.

The majority of pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 are enthusiastic about learning Welsh. However, their language skills are not well developed and their ability to participate in basic conversation and respond to simple questions is limited.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils display enthusiasm and pride in their school. They feel safe and happy and are confident to approach an adult if they have any concerns. Many pupils show good care and consideration for others. They participate well in the wider life of the school, including extra-curricular activities, and are proud to be in positions of responsibility. This includes working as peer mediators where they make a valuable contribution to other pupils' wellbeing.

Pupil attendance over the past three years has remained consistently good and has risen recently to 94%, which is higher than the average level for similar schools and the all-Wales average. Most pupils arrive punctually at the start of the day.

Pupils from all groups take on various roles of responsibility. These roles are well understood and taken seriously by all pupils and include the eco committee and school council. The council's members understand their role in improving the school and their work has led to a number of improvements such as the provision of new equipment for use during break times. The school council is developing a wider role in decision-making within the school and has discussed the school improvement plans.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of fund raising activities for both local and national charities. They are prepared for life and work well through participating in activities such as running the healthy tuck shop.

Pupils are able to evaluate and reflect on how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to improve. This is particularly evident in key stage 2 learning diaries.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The school plans its curriculum well. Staff provide a good range of interesting learning experiences that successfully meet the needs of most pupils. The school is developing a thematic approach to learning. As part of this approach, pupils increasingly suggest their own ideas for aspects of topics that they would like to learn about.

The Foundation Phase is developing well. Children enjoy a good mix of practical, independent and adult-led activities both indoors and out. Long term planning ensures continuity and progression as pupils move from the Foundation Phase and through key stage 2.

Throughout the school, teachers carefully consider how best to group pupils, taking into account their needs and abilities. Grouping arrangements are effective, including in mixed-age classes. The planned curriculum for pupils with ALN is good. The learning experiences provided for pupils in intervention and support groups, for example, have a positive impact on their progress and achievements. Teachers' planning to meet the needs of more able and talented pupils is at an earlier stage of development.

There is an extremely wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities that include football, golf, cooking, gardening, art and choir. This is a strength of the school that considerably enhances pupils' learning experiences. Many parents agree that there is a good range of trips, visits and activities that enrich the curriculum.

The school effectively plans for the development of pupils' communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. For example, teachers provide good opportunities for younger pupils to develop their literacy skills in role-play areas such as the 'estate agents' in Year 1. Planning using 'skills ladders' helps to ensure that pupils build systematically on the knowledge and skills they have developed during the Foundation Phase as they move into and through key stage 2.

Planning for the development of pupils' thinking skills is progressing well. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for, reflect on and evaluate their learning. However, teachers' planning for the development of pupils' creativity and problem-solving skills is not so well developed.

The school's education for sustainable development and global citizenship policy is implemented very well according to the five principles of 'respect, reduce, reuse, recycle and restore'. Pupils' appreciation of the importance of sustainability is effectively developed through subjects such as science. Across the curriculum, there are many good opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of global citizenship. The school's planning for Welsh language development is generally good but the strategies, including those for the use of incidental Welsh, are not implemented consistently across the school. The school promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales appropriately.

Teaching: Good

Most teaching engages learners well and ensures good pupil progress. Lessons and learning experiences are planned effectively, taking account of most pupils' learning needs. All lessons have clear learning objectives, which are shared well with pupils. However, the more able pupils are not always sufficiently extended and challenged. Most teachers have up to date subject knowledge and use a range of approaches and high quality resources, including technology, to motivate and challenge pupils. Learning support assistants are knowledgeable and skilled and contribute very well to the quality of pupils' learning. There is an appropriate balance between adult directed and independent work in the Foundation Phase.

All staff have high expectations of behaviour and this is consistently enforced. Most teachers give feedback to pupils both orally and through effective marking. Assessment for learning strategies are used well in many classes, including self and peer marking. Where this is good, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, these strategies are not embedded throughout the school. Good use is made of learning diaries in key stage 2. These enable pupils to reflect appropriately on their progress against their targets.

Individual pupil progress is assessed regularly and analysed well. This informs future planning and pupil targets. The school makes good use of this data to track pupil progress and identify those in need of support, particularly pupils with ALN. There are robust arrangements for moderation and standardisation of teacher assessments at the end of each key stage both within the school and at cluster level. Reports to parents are comprehensive and provide valuable information regarding next steps and targets for pupils.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The level of care, support and guidance offered to pupils is very effective and results in nearly all pupils enjoying school and wanting to learn. The school promotes effectively the benefits of healthy living, including the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. The school has effective arrangements in place for pupils to manage their feelings and behaviour. This has had a significantly beneficial effect on vulnerable pupils. Pupils clearly understand school rules and procedures. The school provides a safe, caring and respectful environment.

Pupils are provided with a range of good opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally and encouraged to develop a sense of curiosity and to share their viewpoint and own experiences.

The school makes effective use of a wide range of outside agencies to support pupils' learning; for example, there is a strong relationship between the school and the Educational Welfare officer and Prevention Services team. This has ensured targeted professional support and guidance for groups of pupils and their families and has resulted in improvements in attitude, attendance and behaviour.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

The school identifies pupils with additional learning needs through regular teacher assessment, observation and standardised tests. Staff devise individual education plans that clearly target pupils who require extra support and intervention programmes, including support from key agencies. These are regularly reviewed, updated and shared with parents. The school has effective provision for pupils with ALN.

Learning environment: Good

The school reflects its values and ethos in all aspects of its work. It is a caring and fully inclusive community.

Members of staff clearly and consistently communicate their expectations of pupils' behaviour and the way in which they should treat one another. Policies and procedures for preventing and challenging any incidents of discrimination or oppressive behaviour are clearly set out.

Some areas of the building, both inside and out, are in need of repair. A rolling programme of redecoration is effectively raising the standard of the accommodation. Pupils' toilets are clean and bright. Outside spaces such as the playground, field and 'forest school' provide attractive and stimulating areas. The school uses and maintains these areas well.

There are sufficient good quality resources to support pupils' learning. Nearly all pupils state that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work. Displays and resources in classrooms and corridors support pupils' learning effectively and celebrate their achievements.

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

The senior management team, led by the acting headteacher, has developed a clear sense of direction. Weekly senior management team and staff meetings focus on the school's priorities for development. This helps staff develop a shared understanding of their roles in relation to the school's strategies and their responsibilities for raising standards. The school has established a culture that strives for improvement. It analyses data well; this provides a sound basis for monitoring performance across the school.

Performance management procedures for teaching and support staff are well established and lead to objectives for individual staff members. These relate effectively to whole-school priorities and pupil standards and link well with identified areas for improvement. Objectives also relate well to individual development needs.

The governing body is provided with informative analysis of data and is aware of the issues arising from it. It has a good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with similar schools. The governing body contributes effectively to the school's self-evaluation process and provides appropriate challenge to the resulting improvement plans. Members have recently been assigned to individual classes in order to develop their first-hand knowledge of relevant issues and enhance the governing body's role as a critical friend.

School development planning takes account of local and national priorities and incorporates them in appropriate strategies. For example, the school fully implements plans to integrate Year 2 into the Foundation Phase well. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) is implemented throughout the school and has improved pupils' wellbeing.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has a clear commitment to promoting improvement, and self-evaluation procedures identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately. For example, raising standards in ICT for all learners across the curriculum and developing the new leadership team have both been identified as areas for improvement and are being addressed appropriately in improvement plans. Self-evaluation procedures include thorough analysis of performance data and review all aspects of the school's work. Arrangements focus appropriately on the standards pupils achieve. The school uses a good range of first hand evidence from monitoring the quality of teaching and learning through classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parent and learner questionnaires. Many members of staff contribute effectively to these arrangements. The school also benefits from the outcomes of reviews undertaken by the local authority.

All staff contribute effectively to developing improvement plans. These plans include a broad range of relevant actions and identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. They also include success criteria and well-defined realistic timescales for completion. Strategies to evaluate the success of the planned actions are set out. The process of self-evaluation and development planning is becoming an integral and regular part of the school's working life and is beginning to have an impact throughout the school. However, many aspects of this work are ongoing. As a result, many improvement targets are in the early stages of implementation and it is too early to judge how effective they are in raising standards. Some significant initiatives already implemented are not yet fully embedded in the school's day-to-day work.

The school has generally made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection.

Most teachers are involved in professional learning communities within and beyond the school. These networks have contributed well to developing classroom practice and, where relevant, contributed effectively to the development of leadership and management skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has forged strong links with parents that have helped to improve pupils' learning and wellbeing. Parents are encouraged to help their children with reading and topic work and the school has hosted family parenting programmes. The partnership is reciprocal; nearly all parents state that they are satisfied with the school and feel comfortable approaching it with questions, suggestions or problems. The school takes issues raised by parents seriously and acts upon them.

Partnership arrangements with the on-site nursery are very good and the transition arrangements with the secondary school are a strength. A wide range of well-planned visits and activities help ensure a smooth and happy transition from the nursery into the reception class and from primary to secondary school. In the summer term, for example, teachers from Year 6 meet with colleagues in the high school to moderate end of key stage 2 assessments. This helps inform Year 7 teachers about pupils' achievements before they enter secondary school.

The school benefits in many ways from its partnership with the local authority. Regular meetings with the ALN link officer, for example, support the school's provision for pupils with ALN and the development of whole-school policies. Effective partnership work with the child protection officer and social services helps support vulnerable children.

Efficient collaboration with its partner schools enables the school to share funding and resources. This provides continuity for pupils' learning and wellbeing. The school works well with other agencies to develop programmes to tackle disadvantage and underachievement.

Resource management: Good

Leaders manage and deploy staff effectively and efficiently throughout the school, taking account of their expertise and experience. There is a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum effectively. Arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time are appropriate and good quality cover is provided by higher level teaching assistants and teachers. The school's appraisal arrangements meet the professional development needs of staff well.

The school manages its budget well. The school improvement plan clearly identifies priorities for spending on staffing, staff development and resources. Leaders and managers effectively monitor spending plans. Arrangements for responding to contingencies and budget surpluses are good.

The school gives good value for money in terms of pupils' outcomes and in its use of funding.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Within its family of schools, the proportion of pupils achieving level 2 (the expected level at seven years of age) at the end of key stage 1 in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) compares favourably with the average for other schools. Performance levels have been above the average for the school's family in each of the last four years and above the national average for the last three. With the exception of mathematics in 2011, the proportion of more able pupils attaining the higher level 3 in all three subjects has been well above the average for the family in each of the last three years. At key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 (the expected level at 11 years of age) in all three core subjects has been above the family average for the last four years and above the national average for the last three. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5, with the exception of mathematics in 2011, has been above the average for the school's family and for Wales as a whole for the last three years. Assessment outcomes at the end of both key stages generally match the findings of the inspection team.

At key stage 1 over the past three years, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator has been in the upper 50% of national and local benchmarks and when compared to performance levels in similar schools. However, the school has not been in the top 25% of schools during this time, and mathematics has been in the lower 50% of results for schools for the last two years. At key stage 2, in the last three years, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator has been in the higher 50% of national and local benchmarks and in comparison with performance levels in similar schools. In 2009, this proportion was in the highest 25%. Pupils therefore make good progress over their time in the school.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

All pupils feel safe in school and nearly all know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. All pupils say the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that there are lots of opportunities for them to get regular exercise. They feel that they are doing well at school and nearly all say that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress. The majority of pupils also say that other children behave well and that they can get their work done, and most state that children behave well at playtime and lunch time. All pupils say that the school deals well with any instances of bullying.

Nearly all parents say that they are satisfied with the school and that it is well run. They note that their children like the school and they all feel that the children are safe there. Most parents say that they are well informed about the progress their children make at the school. Most say that pupils are well behaved and believe that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Most parents also feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and nearly all say that their child was helped to settle in well when they first started school. A few say that homework does not build well on what their child learns in school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Stephanie James	Team Inspector
Catherine Jenkins	Lay Inspector
Rebecca Turner	Peer Inspector
Claire Russell (Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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