



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

St Joseph's R.C.

**Ashvale
Tredegar
Blaenau Gwent
NP22 4AQ**

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

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

About St Joseph's R.C.

Name of provider	St Joseph's R.C.
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	None
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	111
Pupils of statutory school age	83
Number in nursery classes	14
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 22.9%)	35.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 11.1%)	3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	12.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	04/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/01/2018
Start date of inspection	25/11/2024

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Summary

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is a happy, inclusive school where leaders place a high importance on the well-being of pupils and staff. Nearly all pupils are kind and considerate to their friends, staff and visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and staff know pupils well. This is a strength of the school and enables staff to respond well to meet the individual needs of pupils. The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong. Skilled staff use a range of targeted school interventions effectively to help pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show perseverance and resilience to overcome challenges. Pupils develop their speaking skills successfully, particularly in informal situations. They are eager to talk to adults about their work. Most pupils make sound progress in their writing. They write well for different purposes and audiences. However, staff do not address pupils' errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar effectively enough to ensure that pupils address their mistakes.

From an early age, most pupils learn to apply their mathematical skills effectively in real-life situations and use their digital skills well to support their learning across the curriculum. Although pupils are enthusiastic about learning Welsh, they make limited progress in developing their Welsh oracy skills.

The school has developed a curriculum that engages pupils and provides a range of meaningful learning experiences. Staff provide pupils with interesting opportunities to build on their knowledge and to strengthen their understanding in a range of interesting lessons.

Governors show a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities and provide strong support for the school. The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, promotes a robust culture of safeguarding.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen feedback to pupils to ensure that they address mistakes in a timely manner
- R2 Strengthen pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is a welcoming school where staff place pupils' well-being at the heart of everything they do. The headteacher has a clear vision, which is shared by all staff and governors for ensuring that the school is an inclusive, safe and happy place where pupils develop the range of skills they need for the future through stimulating learning experiences.

Nearly all pupils enjoy school. They feel happy and safe and talk with pride about what it has to offer them. During their time in school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households make good progress from their individual starting points.

The school has developed its curriculum to align with the principles and purposes of Curriculum for Wales. The curriculum is planned well to help pupils learn about their locality, Wales and the wider world. The school places a strong emphasis on authentic learning. For example, pupils in Nursery and Reception develop effective social and communication skills in the role play area. Following a visit to the local fish and chip shop, many pupils were able to take on the roles of shop keeper and customer using correct terminology confidently.

Staff provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures. For example, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 learn about the mining industry that shaped the locality through visits to local heritage centres and consider the impact of global pollution associated with open cast mining. The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils recognise the difference between right and wrong and they participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities.

Most teachers make effective use of strategies such as modelling, clear success criteria and questioning to help pupils understand what they need to do to complete tasks well. In the most effective lessons, teachers maintain momentum by building on pupils' previous knowledge, providing a mix of interactive activities and pausing to review learning. However, occasionally, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners and identify how to improve their own work.

Pupils develop a positive, enthusiastic attitude towards the Welsh language and culture through displays, assemblies and special events. For example, the Criw Iaithe introduce new Welsh playground games in their monthly assemblies. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils build on their Welsh language skills progressively as they move through the school. As a result, too many pupils do not develop their Welsh oracy skills appropriately by the time they leave the school.

The school's recent focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening enables most pupils to make strong progress. They speak confidently to others, for example to introduce themselves to visitors and to share their learning and ask questions. Most pupils make sound progress in developing their writing skills and write well for different purposes and audiences, for example older pupils recall their experiences in detail following local visits, or compiling newspaper reports on the Aberfan disaster.

However, staff do not address pupils' errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar effectively enough to ensure pupils address their mistakes. The school's approach to developing pupils' reading skills is appropriate and helps most pupils to become competent readers. Younger pupils use their knowledge of sounds to read simple texts, and older pupils identify similes and alliteration and then use these effectively in their own writing.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is effective. Leaders work with all staff well to ensure that there is swift identification and bespoke provision to meet the individual needs of pupils with ALN. The school makes good use of a range of intervention strategies, delivered by trained, dedicated teaching assistants, which impact positively on individual pupils' progress and well-being.

Leaders have clear aims and objectives, which focus appropriately on school improvement and on national priorities. They are developing a robust cycle of monitoring that accurately identifies and addresses most key areas for improvement. Staff benefit from professional learning opportunities that align well with school's development priorities and impact positively on teaching and learning.

Leaders and staff are developing effective links with families. The school communicates well with parents and carers and offers regular opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the school and to support their children's learning at home. Leaders and staff promote attendance well and work with a range of agencies to provide support to families when needed. However, although attendance rates are improving, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than that of pupils who are not eligible for free school meals.

The governing body brings together people from a broad range of backgrounds that have a wide skill set that leaders within the school utilise effectively to inform the work of the school. Governors have a good knowledge of the work of the school and its impact in ensuring positive outcomes for pupils. They engage in monitoring activities such as link visits and work scrutiny. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and are beginning to identify areas for development and challenge leaders appropriately.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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