

This letter is also available in Welsh.

St Joseph's Catholic and Anglican Secondary School  
Sontley Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 7EN

07/02/2025

Dear Chris

**Interim visit:** January 2025

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your support during the interim visit to the school on the 15th and 16th of January 2025. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils and hear more about the improvement work that the school has carried out since the core inspection in February 2020.

During the visit we had the opportunity to:

- discuss with leaders the progress the school has made in addressing the recommendation around ensuring that the teaching meets the needs of all pupils and improve the quality and impact of written feedback;
- discuss with leaders the progress the school has made in addressing the recommendation around improving provision for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum;
- talk with pupils from Year 8 and 9 and hear their feedback about the school;
- speak with middle leaders and teachers about their roles in driving improvements in the 2 recommendations;
- conduct a series of joint lesson observations with senior leaders to support your self-evaluation and improvement planning;
- conduct joint work scrutiny with a selection of relevant middle leaders; and
- observe a range of lessons, scrutinise a sample of pupils' work and any relevant documents provided by the school.

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Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

## **Focus of visit**

### **How well do teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils and what impact is written feedback having on pupil progress?**

#### **Planning to meet the needs of all pupils**

Since the time of the last inspection, leaders at St Joseph's have made targeted efforts to support teachers to stretch more able pupils and support those with additional learning needs (ALN). Professional learning has focused specifically on refining teachers' questioning techniques to challenge high achievers as well as supporting those with ALN. The school has a well-considered strategy for supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In the lessons observed during this visit, we saw some examples of how teachers adapted their teaching to meet pupils' needs.

#### **Improving the Impact of Written Feedback**

Leaders have developed a structured approach to improve the quality and impact of written feedback. Departments are encouraged to consider how they will provide feedback when planning units of work and offer pupils clear learning objectives against which their progress can be measured. Leaders are keen to transition away from grades to systems that use formative statements to provide more constructive and developmental feedback to pupils.

The school reported that it has seen success in certain subjects, notably English and mathematics, where pupils report that they value the quality of feedback they receive. However, they acknowledge that the impact of feedback varies too much across subjects. While many teachers effectively identify errors and misconceptions, the usefulness of their comments and the extent to which pupils act upon them remains variable.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How will leaders reduce the variation in the way teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils?
- How will leaders share the identified good practice?
- How will middle leaders use work scrutiny activities to evaluate the impact of written feedback and plan for improvement?

### **How effective is the school's provision to progressively develop pupils' reading and numeracy skills?**

During our visit we were able to hear leaders, including the skills' co-ordinators, talk about their vision of how to develop pupils' reading and numeracy skills across different subjects. Co-ordinators support departments to provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to develop a wide range of reading skills. In the best examples, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary to support them to access challenging

reading texts and enrich their writing. The school has focused well on developing a reading culture. For example, staff and pupil 'Library Ambassadors' are working well together to promote the benefits of reading for pleasure and parents receive useful guidance on how they can support their children with their reading.

Leaders told us how they have worked closely with relevant subject leaders to gain a better understanding of numeracy standards across the curriculum. Recently, they have created a sensible numeracy action plan. They have provided staff with useful professional learning and structured support directly aligned with the areas they have identified as needing further improvement. Whilst leaders recognise there is more work to be done in certain areas it was helpful to see some examples where this is having some impact.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How will leaders ensure that subjects across the curriculum develop the most appropriate enhanced reading skills to support learning?
- How can the school ensure the progressive development of pupils' numeracy skills across relevant subjects?

### **Self-evaluation and improvement planning**

During our visit we heard how leaders use first-hand evidence and relevant information from data sources to inform their evaluations. In the best cases, work scrutiny and lesson observation reports suitably link learning and pupil progress to aspects of teaching and provision. These evaluations include clear, actionable follow-up steps, adding strategic value to the improvement process. However, there was some variation in the extent to which leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement due to a lack of rigour in their evaluations.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How will leaders ensure that departmental evaluations focus more closely on the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and progress?

Thank you again for all your help to plan and arrange our visit. We wish you well for the future.

The school's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6654603>

Yours sincerely



**Catherine Evans**  
Assistant Director