

**A report on**

**St Joseph's Catholic Infant School**

**Water Street  
Aberavon  
Port Talbot  
SA12 6LF**

**Date of inspection: May 2026**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Name of provider	St Joseph's Catholic Infant School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Estyn does not inspect denominational religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for denominational religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.
Number of pupils on roll	118
Pupils of statutory school age	59
Number in nursery classes	30
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 21.7%)	24.6%
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 9.2%)	5.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%

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Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	23.7%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	03/11/2025
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/01/2019
Start date of inspection	05/05/2026

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](http://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

The school is a caring and inclusive community where pupils feel safe, happy and respected. Leaders, staff and governors work together well to create a positive environment with high expectations for pupils' well-being and progress. Staff build strong relationships with families that help pupils to settle quickly and feel confident in school. They monitor the progress of pupils skilfully to ensure that learning experiences inspire and challenge them successfully. Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, enjoy learning and make strong progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills during their time in the school.

The school provides a broad variety of stimulating learning experiences that meet the needs of nearly all pupils successfully. Teachers plan activities that match pupils' interests well, helping them to become motivated and resilient learners. They create learning environments that engage and support pupils to work together positively. Provision for the youngest pupils is particularly imaginative and helps them to make rapid progress in developing their physical, social and independent learning skills.

All pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to work with local businesses and community groups. These activities support pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and social skills to meaningful tasks and to develop as thoughtful and caring citizens.

Staff model language effectively and support pupils, including those learning English as an additional language, to develop confidence in English and Welsh. They use regular story time to promote pleasure in reading successfully. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to write creatively or to develop a suitable range of artistic skills.

Leaders know the school well and use self-evaluation to identify and drive improvements effectively. Governors support the school diligently, ensuring that pupils and staff feel safe and well supported. Attendance has improved steadily, and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly.

## **Recommendations**

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

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to write creatively
- R2 Provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils, families and staff feel safe, valued and respected. The headteacher communicates high expectations and promotes professional values across the school community consistently well. Because of this, leaders, staff and governors share a strong determination to support the well-being and progress of all pupils effectively.

### **Spotlight: Highly inclusive provision**

Staff know pupils and families exceptionally well. Their open and supportive communication creates strong, trusting relationships that help pupils to settle quickly and families to feel comfortable when sharing concerns or seeking advice. Staff build on information provided by parents to develop a detailed picture of individual pupils' needs and to plan for their next steps from an early stage. Leaders collaborate proactively with parents, external agencies and the local authority to provide highly effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. Across the school, staff monitor the effectiveness of provision for all pupils, using careful observation, ongoing assessment and skilled questioning to personalise learning responsively. As a result, nearly all pupils are challenged appropriately, enjoy learning and make strong progress in their well-being and in the development of their skills.

The school's curriculum provides a rich variety of experiences that meet the needs of most pupils and support their holistic development well. Teachers take careful account of pupils' interests and experience when planning learning activities. As a result, pupils show high levels of motivation and work with initiative, often persevering to overcome any difficulties they encounter. Teachers make imaginative use of partnerships with local businesses and organisations for pupils to collaborate on projects that benefit the local community. These worthwhile experiences help pupils develop as informed and caring citizens while applying their literacy, numeracy and social skills purposefully.

Across the school, teachers create stimulating learning environments indoors and outdoors and establish helpful routines that support pupils to interact positively. Because of this, nearly all pupils behave well, cooperate readily and explore confidently. Teachers introduce specific resources in response to pupils' ideas and enhance the environment thoughtfully to reflect pupils' curiosity and emerging needs. Provision for the youngest pupils is highly imaginative and inspires pupils to become absorbed in their learning and to develop their physical, social and independent learning skills particularly well.

Teachers and teaching assistants model language consistently and well. Nearly all pupils, including those with English as an additional language, respond enthusiastically to songs,

rhymes and stories in both English and Welsh. Most pupils develop growing confidence in speaking Welsh, with older pupils using familiar sentence patterns appropriately in simple conversations.

Regular story sessions promote pupils' enjoyment of reading successfully. Nearly all pupils listen attentively, discuss stories confidently and reflect thoughtfully on the feelings and actions of others. These opportunities contribute beneficially to their spiritual, moral and social development.

The school's systematic approach to developing pupils' reading skills ensures that nearly all pupils develop effective strategies to read with increasing independence and understanding. Most pupils apply their knowledge of letter sounds and vocabulary to support their writing successfully. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively in response to what they hear and read.

Most pupils develop their mathematical and digital skills well. Younger pupils gain confidence and extend their understanding through practical activities, while older pupils apply mental strategies effectively and use technology to collaborate purposefully with their peers when solving problems.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles and know how to keep themselves safe online. They enjoy practical and creative activities such as cooking, craft and role play, although opportunities for pupils to develop a suitable range of artistic skills are less well established.

Strong partnerships with families and the community enrich pupils' learning experiences beneficially. Pupils value opportunities to visit a neighbourhood bakery and a local care home and to support the work of the nearby foodbank. These links strengthen pupils' knowledge of their locality and of the diversity of their community meaningfully.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership responsibilities through the 'Missio' pupil voice group. Members contribute positively to school life, for example by supporting award assemblies and developing the school's rules. As a result, pupils develop a growing sense of responsibility and understand that their views can influence decisions within the school community.

Leaders monitor and promote attendance robustly through close work with the education welfare service and regular communication with families. Attendance has improved steadily over time and the number of pupils who are persistently absent continues to decrease. Older pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and take pride in their positive attendance.

Leaders evaluate the school's work effectively. They use a broad range of first-hand evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately. This ensures that improvement priorities are well matched to pupils' needs and take good account of national priorities, including raising attendance and developing pupils' Welsh language skills.

The headteacher has recently strengthened the role of governors and the wider staff team in leading and supporting improvement. Leaders and staff understand their roles well and work closely together to share expertise and reflect thoughtfully on practice. They use professional learning to inform improvement actions and to enhance their knowledge and skills effectively. Strong professional collaboration impacts positively on the quality of provision, for instance in mathematics, where pupils benefit from many well considered opportunities to apply their skills meaningfully across a range of contexts.

Governors support the school effectively and demonstrate a strong commitment to their roles. They place a strong emphasis on well-being and work diligently with leaders to make sure that pupils and staff feel secure and well supported. Governors use their professional knowledge beneficially to provide appropriate challenge to leaders and to ensure that funding and grants are used purposefully to improve outcomes for pupils.

### **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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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

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