

A report on
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

**Brackley Avenue
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7UU**

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Name of provider	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Local authority	Conwy County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	English-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic Voluntary Aided 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	231
Pupils of statutory school age	171
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%)	27.9%
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%)	7.0%

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Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	4.1%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	9.9%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/03/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2019
Start date of inspection	29/06/2026

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

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

Summary

Leaders, staff and governors ensure that St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a welcoming and caring environment through their clear commitment to high levels of inclusion and well-being. Nearly all pupils are friendly and polite and enjoy coming to school, where they feel valued and cared for.

Younger pupils benefit from engaging and purposeful learning experiences that are adapted to meet their needs and develop their independence. In classes for older pupils, too often, teaching lacks pace, purpose and challenge, and lessons do not move pupils' learning forward well enough. A minority of pupils do not engage with their learning as it does not meet their needs and interests, and low-level disruption emerges. Feedback is inconsistent and does not enable pupils to improve their work or identify the next steps in their learning. This means that too many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders do not address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning for older pupils sufficiently through self-evaluation and professional learning.

Nearly all pupils are articulate and talk clearly and thoughtfully. Most pupils read confidently with good understanding. Younger pupils develop their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively and many older pupils show a good understanding of more complex texts. However, inconsistencies in the teaching of writing mean that a minority of pupils do not make good enough progress.

Many staff model the Welsh language effectively and most pupils are able to ask and answer a range of questions well. Most pupils' make good progress in their digital skills and many pupils' numeracy skills develop suitably as they move through the school. Opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Ensure that senior leaders focus on improving the quality of teaching, particularly in the classes for older pupils
- R2 Ensure that leaders' use of self-evaluation and monitoring activities bring about necessary improvement in pupils' standards
- R3 Ensure that teaching and provision supports pupils to develop their skills progressively as they move through the school
- R4 Ensure that teaching and assessment challenges pupils at a suitable level and that feedback helps them to make progress with their learning

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main evaluation

Leaders at St Joseph's have a clear vision to promote high levels of well-being and a strong culture of belonging across the school. This is shared consistently by members of the school community and underpinned by the school's motto, "Grow in love." The school provides a caring and nurturing environment where nearly all pupils feel valued and secure. This helps to ensure that most pupils enjoy attending school and engage positively with school life. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning limit the progress that pupils make with their skills, knowledge and understanding during their time at the school.

Nearly all pupils are polite, friendly and confident. They engage well with adults and their peers and speak enthusiastically about their experiences at school. They develop their social and emotional understanding well through a range of worthwhile opportunities. Involvement in a range of leadership roles assists many pupils to develop their confidence and leadership skills well. These pupils contribute positively to promoting well-being, sustainability and the Welsh language.

From their individual starting points, younger pupils benefit from a range of well-planned activities that enable them to make strong progress with a range of skills. They develop their independence well and solve problems successfully. Teachers adjust provision skilfully to match activities to pupils' stage of development.

In the classes for older pupils, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences are too variable and do not support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. In a minority of lessons, activities do not challenge pupils sufficiently, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve, and the pace of learning does not support pupils to make effective progress. In these lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunity to sustain their thinking or make decisions about how they plan and carry out their work. This hinders their independent learning skills.

In the younger classes, adults use effective questioning techniques to assess pupils' understanding and advance their learning. Overall however, feedback processes are not consistent across the school. Too often they do not support pupils to make progress in their learning or identify and address pupils' misconceptions well enough.

The school's curriculum for younger pupils is developing appropriately. However, planning for the progression of skills is at the early stages of development and there are insufficient opportunities for older pupils to engage in purposeful and authentic learning experiences. This limits their engagement in their learning. Too often older pupils spend time completing low-level tasks that do not meet their needs and interests well enough.

Leaders and governors promote the school's safeguarding culture effectively. The school's anti-bullying programme has contributed successfully to reducing incidents of conflict and bullying during playtimes. Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to seek support if they feel unsafe or experience bullying and are confident issues will be addressed.

Leaders promote the importance of regular attendance well and work positively with families and external partners to support pupils whose attendance is a concern. As a result, overall rates of attendance have improved.

Most younger pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In the best examples, pupils are absorbed in their learning and play and persevere when faced with challenges. Most pupils behave well in lessons and across the school day. However, in the classes for older pupils, where teaching is less effective, low-level disruption occasionally affects pupils' engagement with learning.

The school identifies pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) early and effectively. Worthwhile support helps many pupils with ALN make beneficial progress. The school's 'Pila-Pala' provision has a positive impact on pupils' well-being. It supports pupils effectively to develop resilience, self-regulation skills and a readiness to participate successfully in school life and learning.

Nearly all pupils have good oracy skills. They speak with confidence to adults and to each other using a wide range of vocabulary. Younger pupils talk clearly about what they have learned from visitors, such as how to keep safe in water following visits from the RNLI. Most pupils' use and understanding of Welsh is strong. Staff model the use of the language well and this leads to most pupils developing their Welsh oracy skills successfully.

Most younger pupils develop their early reading skills well. They establish a good knowledge of letters and sounds, which they use successfully to read simple texts. Older pupils read more complex texts fluently with clear expression and understanding. They use reading skills well to infer and deduce meaning from texts.

The school has recently introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing. This is at an early stage of development and the quality of teaching to support pupils' writing skills remains variable. There are too many over-directed activities, and the over-use of worksheets sets low expectations and restricts pupils' writing. This means that a minority of pupils do not make the progress they could.

Provision for the development of mathematics is appropriate. In the younger classes pupils develop their knowledge of number, shape, space and data well in both the indoor and outdoor learning environment. In the older classes teachers ensure suitable coverage

of mathematical skills, although opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills purposefully across the curriculum are limited. Most pupils' digital skills are good. They use a wide range of digital tools confidently to support their learning across different areas of the curriculum.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation activities throughout the year. Where these are most beneficial, they secure improvements successfully for pupils. For example, leaders and governors identified the need to improve rates of attendance. They introduced new processes to identify and address poor attendance that resulted in the more regular attendance of targeted groups of pupils. However, self-evaluation processes in general do not focus sharply enough on the quality of teaching and the impact this has on pupils' progress. This means that leaders do not identify well enough the developmental needs of teachers and because of this professional learning often does not concentrate on improving the most important aspects of teaching. Leaders do not address ineffective teaching appropriately. Too frequently, leaders do not monitor the impact of new initiatives on pupils' progress.

The governing body knows the school and its community well. It brings a range of experiences and skills to support and develop the work of the school. They have a strong commitment to improving their impact on the school. However, their understanding of the quality of learning and teaching at the school is limited.

Leaders and governors use the available budget appropriately to staff the school, provide suitable resources and a well-maintained and purposeful environment. They plan and monitor spending carefully. They ensure the pupil development grant is used 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/carers 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.

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