



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 Joseph's Infant School
Water Street
Aberavon
Port Talbot
SA12 6LF**

Date of inspection: July 2013

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 Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Infant School is in Port Talbot. The school serves a 'Communities First' area where nearly a half of pupils come from one of the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is rising and is currently around 18%. This is below local authority (25%) and national (21%) averages.

There are 143 pupils on roll between the ages of three and seven, including 52 children in the nursery, most of whom attend part-time. Two part-time teachers share responsibility for teaching the nursery class and another two share the Year 1/2 class. Full-time teachers teach the other three classes.

The school has identified around 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which includes a very few who have a statement of special educational need. This is slightly below the national average. Approximately 18% of pupils come from an ethnic minority background. Around 34% of pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupil speaks Welsh as their first language.

The school was last inspected in May 2007. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Joseph's Catholic Infant School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,222 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Neath Port Talbot is £7,410 and the minimum is £2,806. St Joseph's Catholic Infant School is 50th out of the 68 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot 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 school's current performance is good because:

- most pupils make good progress from their starting points;
- the quality of teaching is consistently good;
- stimulating learning experiences successfully engage pupils' interest;
- standards of behaviour are good throughout the school; and
- there is a warm and caring ethos.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and staff have a strong commitment to improvement;
- the school analyses data well to inform the self-evaluation process;
- staff have successfully implemented improvements in important areas of the school's work over the last three years; and
- the findings of the school's self-evaluation are generally accurate.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' ability to write independently, in a variety of forms, in all areas of learning

R2 Ensure a consistently high challenge for more able pupils

R3 Strengthen the role of governors and staff with management responsibilities in determining the strategic direction of the school

R4 Involve staff, governors, parents and pupils fully in the school's self-evaluation process

R5 Improve attendance

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The majority of pupils enter the school with skills that are broadly average for their age. Most make good progress and achieve expected outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase. Nearly all pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills. They share ideas sensibly in pairs and larger groups and organise themselves well during independent role-play activities. Many pupils enjoy adopting the speech patterns of different characters. For example, they growl, "Aye, aye me hearties!" when conducting interviews with applicants for a job as a member of a pirate crew.

Pupils' reading skills are developing well. Most enjoy listening to stories read aloud by their teacher. In their own reading, pupils of all abilities use their knowledge of letters and sounds and their understanding of the story effectively to read any unfamiliar words they encounter. Most read with good expression and use punctuation well to help them make sense of the text. By Year 2, many are aware of the different reading strategies they need to use when reading stories or information books. They know, for example, how to use a contents page and how to flick through a book in order to find a specific piece of information about a topic they are studying.

All pupils write for a good range of purposes. Most make good progress in their handwriting and spelling skills and in their use of punctuation. When given the opportunity to write freely, older and more able pupils write at length. They use some imaginative vocabulary and images to enliven their writing. In poems about summer, for example, they write lines such as, 'Summer smells like the foaming sea'. Overall, however, pupils' ability to write independently and at length, in a variety of forms across the curriculum, is under-developed.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their thinking skills. They reflect well on their learning, give good reasons for their thoughts and explain their ideas confidently. However, pupils' independent learning skills are less well developed.

Pupils make a good start in learning Welsh in the nursery and most build well on their speaking and listening skills as they move through the school. Nearly all listen and respond appropriately to instructions and enjoy singing Welsh songs. Older pupils read simple Welsh texts accurately, with good understanding and expression.

In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2012, all pupils achieved the expected level (Foundation Phase outcome 5 or above) in language, literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity (the Foundation Phase outcome indicator). This placed the school in the highest 25% of similar schools and well above the average for Wales. Girls generally make better progress than boys in language, literacy and communication skills. Overall, boys make better progress than girls in mathematical development.

At the higher Foundation Phase outcome 6, more able pupils' performance in 2012 in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools, but not in the bottom 25%. Pupils' performance in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity placed the school in the highest 25% of similar schools. Girls performed slightly better than boys in all three areas of learning at this level.

Pupils who are eligible for free school meals perform as well as those who are not. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points and many achieve as well as their peers. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Around half of more able pupils achieve the targets set for them.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils understand the need to eat healthily and drink plenty of fluids in order to stay fit. They also know that exercise is important to maintain good health. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They are confident to tell a teacher if they are unhappy and know that staff will deal sympathetically with any concerns.

Nearly all pupils are well motivated and enjoy their lessons, although they lack opportunities to make choices about what they learn. Most pupils are aware of their personal targets for improvement.

Standards of behaviour are good throughout the school. Almost without exception, pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of treating one another kindly and with respect. Nearly all pupils develop good social skills. They collaborate well when working in pairs or small groups in class and play imaginatively and harmoniously together.

Trends in attendance rates show that the school has been in the bottom 25% of similar schools in four out of the last five years. A significant number of parents withdraw their children for holidays in term time, often because work commitments mean they have no choice over when they take their annual leave. This negatively affects overall attendance levels. Punctuality is good.

Members of the school council perform their role seriously and conscientiously. They understand how their decisions affect the wellbeing of all pupils. For example, the establishment of the 'playground buddies' scheme makes a valuable contribution to everyone's happiness and wellbeing at break times.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that meet all curriculum requirements. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that there is parity across year groups. Learning experiences generally meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. However, the over-use of worksheets constrains the amount of independent writing that pupils produce.

A wide range of visitors and educational trips enriches pupils' learning experiences. Many pupils enjoy attending extra-curricular activities such as sports, cookery and art clubs. These have a positive effect on learning and wellbeing.

Planning for the development of literacy skills is effective, but there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills across all areas of learning. The development of pupils' thinking skills is a strength of the school.

Most staff use incidental Welsh regularly. Daily Welsh 'drilling' consolidates pupils' bilingual skills well. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh history and culture through topics such as 'The Wonders of Wales'.

The school acts in a sustainable way. The eco committee undertakes its role seriously and ensures that pupils and adults turn off lights and taps.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of life in other countries well through its links with Peru and India and its support of Catholic Aid for Overseas Development.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Lessons are consistently good. Teachers and support staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn. They use stimulating resources to ignite pupils' curiosity and provide imaginative activities that engage them enthusiastically in their learning.

There are very warm, positive relationships between all members of staff and pupils. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and there is a busy, but calm, working atmosphere in every classroom.

Teachers ask a good range of questions to help pupils reflect on their learning and take every opportunity to develop their thinking skills. Teaching assistants use their skills and expertise effectively to support pupils' learning.

There is a good level of challenge for pupils of all abilities in practical activities and discussions. However, teachers do not consistently adapt written tasks sufficiently for all pupils, particularly the more able.

New assessment procedures mean that the school uses data well to track pupils' progress and to monitor their performance. It uses the information gained to provide effective additional, flexible support for pupils when needed.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, comment positively on their achievements and indicate how they could improve. They encourage pupils to reflect on their work and consider how they can make it better.

Reports to parents provide clear information about their children's achievements and include targets for improvement. Almost all parents feel well informed about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school supports pupils' wellbeing effectively through a variety of initiatives that contribute well to their development and learning. Pupils have good opportunities to take exercise through physical education lessons and extra-curricular clubs and they learn about the importance of a healthy diet.

The school has good procedures for monitoring absence and lateness and works closely with the educational welfare officer on new initiatives to drive up attendance. It works tirelessly with parents to improve attendance.

There are clear class rules and staff use these consistently to ensure that all pupils behave appropriately. They provide many opportunities to develop pupils' social skills through circle time, in class and at playtime.

The school develops pupils' spiritual and moral awareness very well, in line with its Catholic teaching. It promotes pupils' cultural development effectively in lessons, through the annual 'cultural week' and through visits to places such as the national gallery in Cardiff.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There is good support for pupils identified as having additional learning needs and for pupils learning English as an additional language. The extra support provided, both in class and in withdrawal groups, successfully meets pupils' needs. There are good arrangements for accessing additional support and guidance from outside agencies when the need arises.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a warm, welcoming and inclusive ethos that promotes equal opportunities for all pupils. There is a strong emphasis on kindness, caring for others and showing respect towards both adults and children. The school values and celebrates the diversity of pupils' backgrounds.

The well maintained accommodation provides a secure and stimulating environment for all. Vibrant displays support and extend pupils' learning well and make a very positive contribution to the overall quality of the learning environment.

The imaginative use of the small grounds is a strength of the provision. Pupils climb, run, play happily and learn effectively in the many interesting areas provided. The toilets in the main building are of a good standard but poor ventilation affects those in the nursery.

The school has a plentiful supply of resources, including up-to-date ICT equipment, which staff use effectively to support pupils' learning.

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

Leadership: Adequate

The headteacher works hard and has a strong drive to develop and improve the school. Other members of the senior management team, who are relatively new to their role, share this commitment. All members of staff are dedicated to provide the best possible education for their pupils. However, staff are not fully involved in helping to determine the strategic direction of the school.

The governing body is committed to the school. Individual governors visit in order to increase their understanding of its daily life and work. Many governors joined the governing body during the last eighteen months. They are therefore at an early stage of developing a full understanding of their role as critical friends. The headteacher keeps governors well informed about the school's performance but governors are not sufficiently involved in shaping the school's strategic direction.

Job descriptions for all members of staff, but particularly those with management responsibilities, are too general and do not reflect specific roles. The school has appropriate performance management arrangements, but individual personal and professional targets for improvement are not consistently clear. Performance management procedures for support staff are at an early stage of development.

The school is making good progress in addressing national priorities such as raising standards in literacy and numeracy, minimising the impact of social deprivation on pupils' attainment and developing pupils' bilingual skills.

Improving quality: Good

The school draws on a good range of sources of information in its self-evaluation process. It conducts an extensive analysis of all available data on pupils' performance, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This analysis helps to identify relevant areas for improvement.

The school seeks the opinion of all interested groups including staff, pupils, governors and parents but they are not yet fully involved in the self-evaluation process. Nevertheless, the self-evaluation process is generally effective in identifying targets for improvement to include in the school development plan.

The school is ambitious in the number of improvements it wishes to make. The school development plan is an extremely detailed document. There are, however, too many targets to address whilst also ensuring that initiatives previously undertaken have fully embedded in the school's practice. Despite this, over the last three years, planning for improvement has had a positive impact on important aspects of the school's provision such as the quality of teaching, the development of pupils' thinking skills and the provision for learning outdoors.

Partnerships with other schools are effective in areas such as the development of new technologies to support pupils' learning. These are having a positive impact on

pupil outcomes. Staff also work well with colleagues in other schools to assemble and moderate portfolios of pupils' work to ensure consistency in teacher assessment.

Partnership working: Good

There is a good range of useful and productive partnerships that benefit the school and its pupils. The partnership with the family learning group, for example, helps raise pupils' literacy skills prior to their entry to school through the joint use of a scheme that introduces children to letters and sounds.

The school keeps parents well informed about its work through regular newsletters, the website and text messages. The active 'Friends' association raises valuable extra funds for the school which it spends effectively in collaboration with the school council. This has improved aspects of the school's provision such as the range of equipment available for pupils during breaktimes.

The partnership with specialist staff in the local authority, such as the Welsh language support and peripatetic music service, enriches pupils' learning experiences and has a clear impact on the standards they achieve in these areas of learning.

Transition arrangements with the partner junior school prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. As a result, most pupils have a clear understanding of what to expect when they move to Year 3.

The school works well with other primary schools in the local authority cluster. There are also good links with the diocesan cluster of schools, for example in sharing ideas about how to spend the allocation of money from the school effectiveness grant.

Resource management: Good

The school deploys its staff and resources effectively and uses every available corner of the building to provide areas for adults and pupils to work.

There are enough well qualified teachers and teaching assistants to cover all areas of learning. The good quality of teaching is maintained through effective arrangements for covering teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well to plan for, and assess, pupils' learning.

Teachers and support staff develop their knowledge and skills well through appropriate opportunities for continuing professional development. Two members of the support staff, for example, have recently graduated with qualifications that are very relevant to the school's needs.

The headteacher and governing body regularly review the school's budget and adjust spending in response to changing circumstances. The school uses its funding and resources efficiently to ensure pupils make good progress and achieve well. The school therefore gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2012, all pupils achieved the expected level (Foundation Phase outcome 5 or above) in language, literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity (the Foundation Phase outcome indicator). This placed the school in the highest 25% in the family of similar schools and well above the average for Wales.

Boys and girls performed equally well at Foundation Phase outcome 5. There was also no difference in the performance of pupils who were eligible for free school meals and those who were not.

At the higher Foundation Phase outcome 6, pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication was above the average for other schools in the same family and broadly in line with the average for Wales.

In mathematical development, pupils' performance at Foundation Phase outcome 6 was broadly in line with the average for its family of schools, but slightly below the average for Wales.

When benchmarked against schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' performance at Foundation Phase outcome 6 in language and mathematical development placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools, but not in the bottom 25%.

Pupils' performance at Foundation Phase outcome 6 in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was significantly higher than the average for both the family of schools and Wales and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools.

Girls performed better than boys in all three areas of learning at Foundation Phase outcome 6. However, the difference in their performance was not statistically significant and the gap was less marked than the gap between boys and girls in the family of schools and in Wales.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

There were 22 responses to the parent or carer questionnaire.

All parents agree that:

- their child is making good progress;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise; and
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits.

Responses to the questions above are more positive than the average for primary schools inspected in Wales.

Most parents agree that:

- homework builds well on what their child learns at school;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect; and
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress.

Responses to the questions above are more positive, or in line with, the average for primary schools inspected in Wales.

Most parents agree that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes school;
- their child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school;
- pupils behave well;
- teaching is good; and
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility.

Responses to the questions above are less positive than the average for primary schools inspected in Wales.

Many parents agree that:

- their child is safe in school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any individual need;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints; and
- the school is well run.

Responses to the questions above are less positive than the average for primary schools inspected in Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stephanie Joy James	Reporting Inspector
Elizabeth Non Neave	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Mary Boardman	Lay Inspector
Mary Elspeth Dyas	Peer Inspector
Julie Beaumont Rees	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language;
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language;
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.