



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. Primary School

**Sully Road
Penarth
CF64 2TQ**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

About St Joseph's R.C. Primary School

Name of provider	St Joseph's R.C. Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	226
Pupils of statutory school age	175
Number in nursery classes	25
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 23.0%)	14.3%
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 16.1%)	5.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2015
Start date of inspection	26/06/2023

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.

Overview

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is an inclusive and caring school that supports success for all pupils, and service to others, exceptionally well. All pupils love belonging to the school. They speak warmly about their friends and teachers and look forward to coming every day. Pupils are kind and respectful towards each other and the relationship between the oldest and youngest pupils is very strong. The positive and nurturing relationships that exist between pupils, and between staff and pupils, contribute well to the inclusive and welcoming nature of the school and community.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and willingness to support one another in their work and play are notable. They are confident and inquisitive learners and enjoy finding out about things that interest them. Nearly all pupils develop good speaking and listening skills and use these well to build on, or challenge, each other's ideas. Across the school, most pupils develop good mathematical and digital skills. Pupils build their musical and artistic skills well and enjoy performing to a range of audiences. However, pupils do not make enough progress in their writing during their time in the school.

Many teachers plan and deliver a knowledge rich curriculum effectively, through a comprehensive range of engaging learning experiences. Outside learning areas are stimulating and enable pupils to develop knowledge and skills effectively. Teachers offer many opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales and the local area. Provision for physical development is strong, as is the teaching of mathematics where learning happens at a suitably brisk pace. Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is variable, particularly in younger year groups where many activities are over-directed by adults and opportunities to develop independence are limited.

The headteacher has created a clear vision for the education and well-being of learners, and shared it effectively with all stakeholders. The headteacher takes the lead in ensuring that the school provides an inclusive and caring environment for all. There is a strong team ethos across the school, where pupils and staff feel supported and valued. Members of the governing body are supportive and well-informed. Leaders have identified many of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, self-evaluation and improvement processes are overly complex and leaders identify too many priorities. This makes it difficult for the school to focus well enough on the most important aspects of its work.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes to ensure that they focus on the most important areas of school improvement
- R2 Improve the consistency of teaching and provision to ensure that it is appropriate to pupils' stage and age of development and successfully develops pupils' independence
- R3 Improve pupils' writing skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Overall, many pupils make good progress in their learning during their time in school. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) progress well from their individual starting points and a few make particularly strong progress against their targets.

Across the school, many pupils make good progress in developing their language and communication skills. Most pupils express themselves confidently from an early age. They talk enthusiastically about their play and experiences. For example, nursery pupils talk at length about a recent holiday. From Year 2, many pupils begin to discuss their learning using subject specific vocabulary and, by Year 6, many pupils speak knowledgeably about an area of interest, asking searching questions to further their understanding. Older pupils explore issues linked to their topic, using intonation effectively to build on or challenge each other's ideas successfully, for example when considering who was responsible for the sinking of the Titanic.

Many pupils develop suitable reading skills and apply them appropriately to their work. From an early age, many pupils show an interest in books and read age-appropriate texts with increasing fluency by the end of Year 2. Most continue to develop their reading skills well as they move from Years 3 to 5, but do not always use appropriate strategies to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words. In Year 6, many pupils read a range of material with understanding and fluency. They enjoy challenging texts and engage well in shared reading experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils are engrossed in their class text, 'Goodnight Mister Tom', and cannot wait to read the next chapter.

Nearly all nursery pupils develop early writing skills well. For example, they mark make confidently and form recognisable letters. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 build

on these skills appropriately to write words and construct sentences, using their knowledge of sounds and letters to write familiar words. Generally, most pupils in the 7-11 age range write suitably for a range of purposes, linked to their cross-curricular contexts. For example, many pupils write diary extracts, letters and narratives, showing empathy and respect where appropriate, applying their skills well across the curriculum. However, pupils do not write at length or develop an understanding of how to organise their ideas into whole texts well enough.

Most pupils' Welsh language skills are developing appropriately overall. Younger pupils respond suitably to questions and understand basic commands. Many older pupils respond well to teachers' instructions and most use a variety of Welsh phrases, for example when ordering food from a menu or predicting the weather. Only a minority of pupils have the confidence to use Welsh in informal contexts throughout the school day.

Through structured lessons, nearly all pupils build their mathematical and numerical skills well and make strong progress. From an early age, most pupils acquire a range of mathematical skills and use them in a variety of contexts, such as using non-standard measures to compare the height of different toys. By Year 2, many pupils have a good understanding of number and use suitable language to describe the properties of 2D shapes. Most older pupils become confident mathematicians, applying their skills well to solve complex problems. For example, pupils generate and describe number sequences and patterns using algebra. Many pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum successfully, for example when using graphs to evaluate the impact of developments in Cardiff Bay.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and develop their digital skills well. Younger pupils use these skills constructively in a range of learning experiences, including programming a toy to move around a path, and using tablet computers to record their work. Most older pupils use their digital skills well to support their learning, for example using spreadsheets resourcefully to plan a budget for a party, and using tablets to undertake research and present their findings in creative ways. Many Year 6 pupils are confident in using coding. Nearly all pupils know how to keep safe on-line when learning at school and home.

Through a range of activities, many pupils develop a wide range of physical skills well. For example, younger pupils skilfully climb low trees and use the outdoor trail to improve their co-ordination and balance. Nearly all pupils continue to build on these skills well as they explore the outdoors and many participate in the wide range of activities available to them throughout the year, such as athletics, ball-games and gymnastics.

Many pupils develop their creative skills successfully during workshops and musical events. For example, Year 5 pupils created a soundscape of the Brecon Beacons, inspired by a painting of the landscape. During their time in the school, many pupils have opportunities to perform for a variety of audiences, which builds confidence and self-esteem.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The positive, caring and nurturing relationships that exist among pupils, and between staff and pupils, support well-being exceptionally effectively and are a strength of the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and make visitors feel welcome. Nearly all pupils love the school, speak highly about the pupils and teachers and are very proud to be part of St Joseph's school community.

Nearly all pupils across the school know that adults in the school care for them and this means that they feel safe, secure, valued and treated fairly. They know whom to approach for advice and support if they are worried or upset, and are confident that staff will listen to them, respond swiftly and deal effectively with any concerns they have.

Many pupils have positive attitudes to learning, settle quickly and engage in their work successfully. They are confident and inquisitive, eager to find out more about things that have inspired them. For example, after learning about different environments and survival skills, pupils researched and designed a device that could collect and save rainwater. Many pupils enjoy new challenges and collaborate very well when working in pairs or groups. They are considerate towards each other; they listen carefully and show respect for different views and ideas.

The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is exemplary. Nearly all pupils show kindness and care towards one another. For example, each Year 6 pupil becomes a 'Guardian Angel' to a reception 'Cherub', sharing weekly reading sessions and looking after them at playtimes. This positive relationship develops a strong sense of responsibility in older pupils and helps to ensure that younger pupils settle successfully into the school environment.

Pupils make good use of opportunities to develop their leadership skills through a range of ministries and teams, or by becoming a cabinet member in the School Parliament. Pupils who undertake these roles do so with confidence and enthusiasm. They take the responsibilities of these roles very seriously and are committed to improving aspects of the school and community that are important to them. Members of the Parliament regularly present new initiatives to pupils and parents and explain how their work has made a positive impact on school life. For example, the Eco Ministry planted trees in a local park, litter picked in local areas and created a 'Do Not Litter' poster to improve the school's outdoor environment and their community. In addition, they conduct a 'Switch Off Fortnight' in classes to raise awareness of saving energy. Pupils have a strong voice in many important aspects of school life; however, this is less well-developed in influencing learning to reflect current interests and fascinations.

Pupils understand, and can discuss at length, the importance of keeping themselves fit and healthy by making good food and drink choices. They know the importance of being active. Nearly all take regular exercise in school, participating in a range of activities, including cross country, badminton and cycling, and many attend numerous after-school sports clubs. The School Parliament provides a range of resources to encourage pupils to be active at playtimes. Digital leaders have rolled out independent login practice across the school to help keep pupils safe on devices. Consequently, all pupils know how to keep themselves safe on-line.

Nearly all pupils have a strong understanding of their rights and responsibilities as global citizens. The school's Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister lead the school in developing pupils' understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and how this applies to them. In addition, through a range of fundraising activities, pupils gain a good understanding of the needs of others, for example by holding a Literature Festival to raise funds, so that children in other countries have an opportunity to learn to read.

Overall, the attendance of all pupils across the school is good and shows an improving trend following the pandemic. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is slower to recover.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, teachers and all staff know their pupils well and develop positive working relationships with them. Staff show care, humour and kindness to pupils, which ensures that most pupils are confident in the school environment and engage well in their learning.

Leaders and staff have worked effectively together to plan and deliver a progressive curriculum for their pupils, which is knowledge rich, develops many skills and provides a comprehensive breadth and depth of worthwhile learning experiences.

Teachers have sound subject knowledge and provide a range of interesting experiences that ensure knowledge builds successfully on prior learning through a series of domains or themes. Many teachers share relevant learning objectives and provide pupils with clear explanations to support learning appropriately. At the end of each domain, teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for Years 5 and 6 pupils to immerse themselves in a range of in-depth, high quality enquiry projects linked to their learning. For example, many pupils produced their own presentations about the Battle of Hastings and created Norman castles at home. However, teachers do not always provide opportunities for younger pupils to play a key part in determining the learning experiences they complete.

Outside learning areas are well-developed and teachers provide many interesting experiences that develop pupils' skills and knowledge well, such as giving older learners the chance to whittle wood to make bows and arrows, inspired by their study of the Celts. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to use outdoor areas purposefully to develop their drama and physical skills, or improve their gardening knowledge. Forest school is particularly successful in providing beneficial opportunities for learning for pupils who find the indoor environment a challenge.

Teachers ensure that there is a wide range of opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales and the local area. For example, pupils develop an understanding about the work of the Welsh Government when visiting the Senedd, or about their local area at Penarth Pier and Cosmeston Lake. They are inspired by visitors who come into the school to work with them to create eye-catching art murals or motivate them to enhance their badminton skills.

Provision for physical development is strong, as is the teaching of mathematics and digital skills, where learning happens at a suitably brisk pace. Overall, teaching

supports the development of reading and writing appropriately. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise their Welsh language occasionally, for example when welcoming pupils onto site each morning. Many teachers encourage pupils to develop their Welsh speaking skills during planned Welsh language activities such as Helpwr Heddiw and collective worship, which provides a strong bilingual experience. Criw Cymraeg take the lead in promoting incidental Welsh across the school by sharing a phrase of the week with pupils and parents. However, most teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to speak Welsh throughout school day.

In many classes, the quality of teaching is good. However, there is too much variability across the school. In the many cases where teaching is strong, classrooms are well-organised to support independent learning and teachers know their pupils well. Teachers ensure that tasks have an appropriate level of challenge and that pupils have good support during introductory tasks. Generally, teachers know when to intervene appropriately to move learning forward. They target questions well to activate prior learning and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. A few teachers ask probing questions, which extends pupils' learning effectively. In a few classes, however, adults direct pupils' learning too much, and this is particularly the case for younger pupils, where provision is not suited well enough to their age and stage of development. Overall, feedback to pupils does not always support pupils well enough to understand what they need to do to improve.

Teachers use a wide range of ICT programs to enable pupils to communicate their thinking confidently and creatively across many areas of the curriculum. For example, most pupils use these programs to generate informative posters, fact files and presentations including one on amazing Welsh food.

Care, support and guidance

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Most pupils engage positively in daily prayer, meditation and reflection either in school, or when visiting the local parish church. Purposeful displays around the school communicate its morals and values effectively. Most pupils explore the religious beliefs of people around the world as part of their curriculum activities. For example, pupils in Year 4 develop a sound understanding of Judaism.

Nearly all pupils benefit from the opportunities the school offers through its pupil voice groups. These include a wide representation from across the school community, including those with ALN and pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The School Parliament and Government Groups encourage pupils to take on responsibilities and contribute positively to the school and wider community. For example, the Chaplaincy Team helped to support vulnerable members of the community by organising and distributing bags of essential toiletries to help them to cope with the current cost-of-living crisis. The group also added a little 'something' extra to each bag, a joke or a mindfulness task, ensuring that they also enhanced community well-being.

The school provides many exciting opportunities for pupils to explore their Welsh identity and culture. For example, an Arts Council Wales 'Cynefin' project allowed many older pupils to secure an excellent understanding of their local community. They used their music and digital skills to present their project successfully to a wide

audience through an inspiring rap and song titled 'Somewhere only we know – Penarth'. Similarly, a 'Show Racism the Red Card' project for Year 3 enabled most pupils to develop a good understanding of diversity and differences within society and this has led to the promotion of an anti-racist culture in the local community. The school works effectively to help pupils to develop a purposeful understanding of renewable energy production. For example, older pupils made solar kettles, windmills and their own device to power a car as part of a piece of work looking at renewable energy sources.

All staff understand pupils' needs well and they respond with sensitivity to them. They provide good quality support for pupils' mental and physical well-being. For example, through the daily 'check-ins', staff are immediately informed if an individual pupil feels anxious or vulnerable for any reason. The relationship that exists between Year 6 'Guardian Angels', and reception 'Cherubs' is exceptionally supportive and allows older pupils to build a highly nurturing relationship with the very youngest pupils. This begins through the welcome letters they post during the summer holiday and continues throughout the year.

Support for pupils with ALN is a strength of the school. There are robust procedures in place to identify, support and track individuals and groups of pupils. Purposeful intervention programmes ensure that pupils' needs are met effectively in the classroom and in groups. Well-qualified staff deliver a wide range of beneficial support, which helps most pupils to develop their phonic, number and emotional skills well. The school works successfully with a range of external agencies to enhance its ALN provision and provide timely support.

The school manages and supports pupils with challenging behaviours effectively. There are robust procedures in place for tackling the very few incidents of bullying, including anti-racist behaviours, that occur in the school. These form part of the school's developing culture of safeguarding.

Generally, the school's culture of safeguarding is appropriate. However, during the inspection, the team identified a few safeguarding issues of concern. Leaders took swift and appropriate action to address these immediately before the end of the inspection.

Procedures for securing good attendance are robust and effective and, as a result, pupils' attendance overall is good. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below that of all pupils.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear and child-centred vision for the school that is rooted deeply in the Catholic faith. This vision focuses on providing excellent teaching and fostering the development of happy, successful and rounded pupils. This strong sense of moral purpose is shared by all staff. It permeates all aspects of the school's work and is fundamental in creating a caring community that supports success for all pupils and service to others.

The school's relationships with parents and the wider community are a notable strength. Leaders are approachable and parents trust them to address any concerns

promptly and sensitively. Communication with parents is effective and their contributions to school life are welcomed and valued. For example, a few lead after-school clubs and the St Joseph's Friends and Family Association contribute significant funds to the development of the school's outdoor environment.

The headteacher has placed a strong focus on building leadership capacity across the school. She has provided additional professional learning opportunities by co-opting colleagues onto the leadership team. Generally, these leaders understand their roles well, although not all roles and responsibilities align well enough with the school's improvement priorities.

Through its involvement as a pioneer school for the Curriculum for Wales, senior leaders have worked creatively and thoughtfully with staff to develop a curriculum design process that is clear and systematic. There is a strong focus on important elements, such as progression in pupils' knowledge and skills, and the provision of rich learning experiences. They keep the development of the curriculum under close review and involve middle leaders and staff well in evaluating the school's work in this area. The school plays a prominent role in its cluster, supporting the development of shared expectations of what pupils should know and be able to do as they move from primary into the secondary age phase.

The headteacher and her leadership team work well together and have had a strong, positive impact on pupils' well-being and curriculum provision. All teachers and support staff participate in a wide range of professional learning, which is aligned closely to national priorities, the school's priorities and performance management processes. Leaders provide dedicated non-teaching time for staff to engage in reading and enquiry to improve their knowledge and skills. There are also well-embedded opportunities for teachers to observe each other's practice. This approach has been successful in improving aspects of their teaching, for example in mathematics and numeracy.

Governors are supportive and committed to the school community, bringing a wide range of valuable skills and experience to their roles. They fulfil their statutory duties to promote healthy eating and drinking, and act suitably as a 'critical friend'. The role of the 'link governor' for curriculum areas and other aspects of the school's work is well-established. Governors visit classrooms regularly to talk to staff and pupils, as well as looking at their books. These first-hand experiences, coupled with detailed headteacher reports and informative presentations from staff and pupils, mean that they are knowledgeable about its work.

Governors support leaders to manage the school's finances appropriately. Broadly, they are aware of how the school spends the pupil development grant. However, they do not monitor how well the school targets resources specifically to support those pupils who are eligible. Whilst governors are aware of the school's priorities, their direct contribution to school self-evaluation is limited.

Leaders use a wide range of evidence, including first-hand evidence, to review the school's work. They involve stakeholders well in some areas of self-evaluation processes, through providing opportunities for them to respond to questionnaires and participate in focus groups. In particular, the School Parliament plays a prominent role in reviewing the school's work and identifying areas for improvement. For

example, it took the lead in a project to find out how outdoor learning impacts positively on pupils' self-esteem and confidence. However, the school remains over-reliant upon standardised tests to evaluate how well pupils are learning and making progress. There is too little focus on how well pupils have developed their skills, knowledge and understanding, despite this being a prominent feature of the school's curriculum design.

Whilst leaders identify many of the school's strengths and areas for development accurately, they have overlooked a few important aspects of the school's work requiring improvement, such as pupils' independent learning skills. Overall, the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes are overly complex, and identify too many priorities. This makes it difficult for the school to focus well enough on driving forward the most important aspects of its work. However, in the areas where leaders have identified and prioritised an area, beneficial improvements have been made to secure sustained improvements. For example, the implementation of a new approach to mathematics has secured consistent and effective teaching across the school and, as a result, nearly all pupils make good progress in mathematics and numeracy as they move through the school.

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

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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