

A report on
Johnstown School

**Salem Road
Johnstown
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA31 3HS**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

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

About Johnstown School

Name of provider	Johnstown School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	443
Pupils of statutory school age	348
Number in nursery classes	52
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 22.9%)	14.8%
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 11.1%)	3.45%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	5.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	15.6%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2018

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Start date of inspection	23/06/2025
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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

Johnstown Primary School is a happy and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, valued and ready to learn. Staff build strong working relationships with pupils and set high expectations for behaviour. Most pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers plan interesting and authentic learning activities that support pupils' knowledge of their community, Welsh culture and the wider world. Younger pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to play, explore and influence their learning. They develop their independence and curiosity well. Older pupils have fewer opportunities to make decisions about how and what they learn.

Leaders focus well on teamwork and well-being, and they evaluate the work of the school effectively. Staff benefit from professional learning that develops their skills and helps to address whole-school priorities.

In most lessons, teachers ask thoughtful questions, check understanding, and provide pupils with useful feedback. When learning is most effective, teachers move learning along at a brisk pace and meet the needs of all pupils. However, in a few lessons, learning slows, and not all pupils are sufficiently challenged.

Across the school, many pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills, and they use their writing well across the curriculum. Teachers use Welsh phrases regularly in class and help pupils learn new words and sentence patterns. Pupils enjoy reading and develop their digital and maths skills well through authentic and engaging tasks.

While many pupils attend school regularly, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is considerably lower than that of their peers. Parents feel involved in the work of the school and feel well supported, particularly those with children with additional learning needs (ALN).

Recommendations

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

- R1. Improve the consistency of pace and challenge in teaching to better meet the needs of all pupils
- R2. Provide greater opportunities for older pupils to contribute purposefully to whole-school improvements and direct their own learning
- R3. Improve the attendance of pupils that are eligible for free school meals

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Staff at Johnstown Primary School create a calm and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and respected. They establish strong working relationships with pupils and model high expectations for their behaviour. Most pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. Across the school, staff support pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. Nearly all pupils show a high level of respect for each other in the school's inclusive community. During their time in school most pupils make good progress from their different starting points.

Teachers collaborate well to design and implement a curriculum that provides pupils with a broad range of authentic learning activities. They enable pupils to develop a good knowledge and understanding of their local community, Wales and the wider world. Pupils in the younger classes regularly influence how and what they learn, and they develop skills to express their thoughts and opinions clearly. Pupils from Year 3 upwards do not have the same opportunities.

School leaders provide strong leadership. They have a clear focus on teamwork and prioritise the well-being of pupils and staff effectively. Leaders evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development carefully through a range of monitoring activities. They use information from this activity well to provide clear feedback for staff that develops their practice. Leaders identify and implement suitable whole school priorities and monitor progress towards achieving these regularly. A broad range of beneficial professional learning supports school improvement. For example, recent training opportunities help pupils improve and repair relationships with their peers has had a positive impact on their behaviour. Leaders support the performance and development of teachers and teaching assistants well.

In the youngest classes, staff create purposeful and engaging learning environments that nurture pupils' curiosity and independence. In the classes for older pupils, staff provide well-organised classrooms that support their learning well. Across the school, most teachers use a range of effective questioning strategies, they link activities to prior learning and check pupils' understanding regularly. They provide useful feedback that supports pupils to refine and improve their work effectively. When learning activities are particularly effective, staff move learning at a good pace and successfully meet the needs of all pupils. However, in a minority of learning activities, the pace of learning is slow, and the level of challenge does not meet the needs of pupils well enough.

Across the school, staff are strong language role models and provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their English oracy skills across the curriculum. Most pupils make good progress and communicate clearly and confidently in a range of

contexts. Staff model and use Welsh effectively. They provide regular opportunities in classrooms for pupils to develop Welsh vocabulary and sentence patterns. Opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh language skills in purposeful and authentic contexts are limited.

The school promotes a strong culture of reading. Younger pupils learn early reading skills effectively and enjoy listening to a variety of stories. By the time they get to Year 6, most pupils read fluently and develop their critical thinking skills well. They read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts with accuracy. Staff develop pupils' writing skills successfully and provide a broad range of authentic contexts and purposes for them to write. By the time they reach Year 2, many pupils write in sentences and use their early reading skills to help them to spell. In the classes for older pupils, many pupils write accurately for a range of purposes.

Throughout the school, most pupils benefit from regular opportunities to develop their digital skills across the curriculum. This is particularly effective in mathematics, where pupils use devices to present and manipulate data accurately, or use coding to explore coordinates. Many pupils develop their mathematical skills well. The youngest pupils learn to count and understand the properties of numbers. Older pupils use their calculation skills accurately in a broad range of contexts, such as regular science investigations.

The school's provision for pupil with additional learning needs (ALN) is coordinated effectively. Staff provide pupils with purposeful targets and learning activities that meet their needs well. They regularly review pupil progress and make changes to their support when required. This enables most pupils with ALN to make suitable progress from their different starting points.

Members of the governing body provide knowledge and enthusiastic support, and they have a good understanding of the community the school serves. They have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and current priorities. Leaders take appropriate actions to address national priorities such as Curriculum for Wales and the implementation of ALN reform. The school has suitable systems in place to monitor the attendance of pupils, and the attendance of many pupils is improving steadily. However, there has not been a sufficient focus on improving the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals. The attendance of this group of pupils is notably lower than that of their peers.

Many older pupils, including those with ALN, are members of the school's pupil leadership groups. Although pupils are enthusiastic about these opportunities, the impact of pupil voice is limited.

Spotlight: Strong links with parents

The school develops strong links with parents and carers. They organise a broad range of engagement events that support parents' knowledge and understanding of the school's work. For example, the 'Celebrate Learning' events enable parents to experience learning activities during the school day. Leaders regularly ask parents for their opinions through questionnaires and the parent forum. They make changes following feedback, for instance to adapt home learning activities. The links with parents of pupils with ALN is particularly effective. These include drop-in sessions for parents where they can access beneficial support and advice.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern

The school's arrangements for site management give cause for concern and have been brought to the attention of the local authority

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.

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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