

A report on

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

**Nobel Avenue
Port Talbot
SA12 6YN**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

Name of provider	St Joseph's Catholic Junior School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	English-medium
Type of school	Junior
Religious character	Catholic Voluntary Aided
Number of pupils on roll	166
Pupils of statutory school age	166
Number in nursery classes	Not applicable
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%)	23.8%
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 9.2%)	5.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	14.5%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/03/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2019
Start date of inspection	24/11/2025

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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

St Joseph's Catholic Junior School is a warm, welcoming and inclusive school, where each pupil is known and valued. The Head, staff and governors have a clear vision which focuses on the social and emotional well-being of staff and pupils. As a result of this, nearly all pupils are empathetic and compassionate, showing kindness and care to each other. Pupils' behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.

There is a strong culture of teamwork in the school and staff work effectively, with a shared commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils, including those pupils effected by poverty or with additional learning needs (ALN). Leaders and staff ensure that there is effective support for pupils with ALN, and that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

When they start in St Joseph's, most pupils have skills which are appropriate to their age. During their time in school, many pupils make good progress in their mathematical knowledge and understanding, which they are beginning to apply in other parts of the curriculum. Most pupils develop strong digital skills and use these effectively for a range of purposes. However, many learning activities are too directed and do not allow pupils to develop independence in their learning.

A focus on their speaking and listening skills means that most pupils communicate well with each other and have a good vocabulary. They are able to collaborate, share ideas and agree conclusions effectively when working in a group. Most pupils are keen to talk about their learning and are polite, friendly and confident when speaking. This includes engaging very positively with the Welsh language. Nearly all pupils develop their skills in speaking Welsh well and use Welsh throughout each day, both within and outside the classroom.

Most pupils read well and with expression and many older pupils use inference and deduction to support their wider learning. Recent changes to the teaching of writing are starting to enable pupils to write competently at length for different purposes across the curriculum.

Most teachers use a suitable range of teaching and assessment strategies and the curriculum is beginning to build appropriately on previous knowledge, skills and experiences. However, leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching nor its impact on pupils' progress sufficiently.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation processes so that leaders ensure that the quality of teaching and learning experiences have a positive and consistent impact on pupil progress
- R2 Strengthen the opportunities for pupils to make choices about how and what they learn and apply their skills independently

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher, staff and governors at St Joseph's have a clear vision which focuses on the social, spiritual and emotional well-being of staff and pupils. This creates a happy, welcoming and inclusive ethos which permeates all areas of school life successfully and is evident each day in the pupils' interactions in their learning and in their play. Most pupils show care and consideration for their peers and collaborate effectively. The school supports pupils' emotional well-being effectively. This helps to ensure that pupils' behave well and there are very few incidents of bullying. Positive reward systems such as the 'Joe Bucks' shop, led by the school council, support and promote positive behaviour across the school.

When they start in Saint Joseph's, many pupils have literacy and numeracy skills appropriate for their age. The strong focus on pupils' well-being, and well-considered support and guidance, ensures most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. As they progress through the school, many pupils make suitable progress in many areas of learning, particularly with their speaking and listening, Welsh, and social and emotional skills.

Spotlight: Effective support for pupils with additional learning needs

The school has strong provision to meet the learning and well-being needs of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The school's procedures and processes for supporting these pupils are robust. The ALNCo provides effective leadership that contributes positively to the inclusive culture at the school. She/he works well with senior leaders to ensure that staff benefit from purposeful professional learning. Staff monitor the progress of pupils with ALN carefully, ensuring that provision is adapted promptly where required. Strong, positive relationships with families, staff and pupils ensure that everyone is actively involved in discussions that help everyone to understand the pupils' achievements and next steps.

Throughout the school, staff are effective language role models. They provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to talk within and about their learning. As a result, most pupils are enthusiastic and keen to communicate with each other, visitors and staff. They communicate confidently in a range of contexts, talking about their work and experiences with expression and clarity. They listen well, take turns to speak, and express their thoughts and ideas clearly. Most pupils collaborate effectively to share ideas and agree conclusions when working in a group.

Staff support pupils appropriately to develop an early interest in books. Most pupils read well and with expression, and many older pupils use inference and deduction to support their wider learning. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills for range of purposes. Many younger pupils use full stops and capital letters accurately and write legibly. As they move across the school, many older pupils make sound use of the features of different text types and increasingly sophisticated punctuation. However, most pupils do not yet have regular opportunities to make choices about how they present or develop their learning.

The development of pupils' Welsh language and communication skills is strong. School staff are effective role models, using Welsh consistently throughout each day. Most pupils make good progress in developing an increasing range of Welsh vocabulary, questions and sentence patterns. They speak bilingually with increasing confidence and accuracy to each other and to visitors and are proud of their Welsh and local heritage.

Most pupils make suitable progress in their mathematical skills. Most younger pupils understand place value and read and write numbers to 1000 with confidence. Older pupils are able to calculate area and perimeter of simple shapes well. Many pupils use calculation skills competently, such as to calculate items they can buy within a budget.

However, too often the over reliance on worksheets inhibits opportunities to develop and apply these skills independently, and activities lack challenge.

Many pupils are confident users of digital technologies. They use these well to create graphs in Welsh and demonstrate useful internet research skills to inform their learning. Older pupils make useful interactive presentations on online safety and use spreadsheets with simple formulae to plan a party. Most pupils develop sound physical and creative skills. They study artwork as a stimulus to discuss values and create dance and gymnastics routines using a range of movements and balances. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills, such as singing in two-part harmonies.

Most pupils develop their moral and cultural understanding well. They are able to compare aspects of their own beliefs with those of other religions. As a result, they successfully develop values of tolerance and respect for themselves and each other. Many pupils are very reflective. They consider thoughtfully how they can apply values such as love, kindness and stewardship in their own lives.

In the majority of lessons, teachers make suitable use of ongoing assessment to adapt learning tasks to meet the needs of the pupils. They use effective questioning to support and enhance pupils' learning. Many teachers provide relevant feedback that enables pupils to develop their learning further, explain their understanding and address misconceptions. Where this is the case, pupils respond positively to this feedback and achieve next steps in their learning readily. In most cases, teachers provide pupils with appropriate levels of support. However, too much direction and a lack of challenge often limits pupils' opportunities to develop independence in their learning.

The school provides pupils with the opportunity to take on leadership roles through various pupil voice groups, including the school council and the eco-council. These groups are at an early stage of development.

Leaders ensure that a range of monitoring and evaluation activities take place through the year. When these are most effective, they lead to purposeful professional learning that improves teachers' skills and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, the recent introduction of a new writing strategy is already giving pupils greater opportunities to write purposefully, and at length. However, too often, self-evaluation processes focus mainly on ensuring compliance with school policy and do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, nor identify ways forward.

Governors are very proud and supportive of the school, and engage positively in many aspects of school life, providing valuable support and a visible presence. School leaders and governors manage finances well. They plan the use of grant funding appropriately to address the impact of poverty on attainment, prioritising additional support in literacy, numeracy and well-being. They ensure that pupils from low-income households have equal access to the opportunities and learning experiences that the school offers.

However, very few governors take part in self-evaluation activities, and they do not receive focused feedback on pupil progress and the quality of teaching. This limits their ability to evaluate accurately the impact of their decisions.

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.

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)

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

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