



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: January 2019

by

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

About St Joseph's Infant School

St Joseph's Infant School is in Aberavon in Neath Port Talbot local authority. There are 127 pupils on roll aged from three to seven years, of whom 43 attend part-time in the nursery. The school organises pupils into three single-age classes and the nursery.

On average, around 11% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average of 18%. The school identifies about 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs, below the national average of 21%. A few pupils come from an ethnic minority background or have English as an additional language. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2010. The school's previous inspection was in July 2013.

The school is currently a 'pioneer school'. This means that it is working with the Welsh Government and other pioneer schools to develop a national model of professional learning and to develop and pilot a new curriculum for Wales.

Estyn does not inspect 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 religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School is a caring and effective learning community. In their time at the school, most pupils develop their skills and understanding successfully. They enjoy interesting and positive learning experiences with staff who understand them well.

Leaders understand the needs of pupils well. They support staff effectively and ensure that all have meaningful training that allows them to engage pupils skilfully. Leaders work well with parents and foster effective partnerships with other schools and the local community. This contributes beneficially to pupils' wellbeing.

Teachers plan engaging learning activities, using the schools indoor and outdoor environments purposefully. Staff ensure that pupils have worthwhile opportunities to learn through adult-led and independent play activities. As a result, pupils are happy and polite, and they enjoy school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rigour with which the governing body monitors pupils' standards and holds leaders to account
- R2 Ensure that pupils have more consistent opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Improve pupils' ability to listen to others and to focus purposefully on independent tasks

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are around those expected for their age. As they move through the school, most make effective progress from their starting points. Most pupils with additional needs make good progress towards their individual goals and targets.

Many pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They talk confidently about their experiences and engage well in conversations with each other and adults. For example, pupils in the nursery discuss the importance of crossing the road safely using a broad range of vocabulary. As they progress through the foundation phase, most pupils begin to organise what they want to say carefully using more complex sentences. For example, they include relevant detail when re-enacting the story of a lighthouse keeper in their small world play. Older pupils retell stories successfully using descriptive language to explain and describe how the characters are feeling. Many pupils use their language skills effectively in problem solving activities, for example, when working collaboratively to build a house for a character in their class book. However, a minority of pupils do not always listen well to others when they are speaking.

Across the school, most pupils develop effective reading skills. In the nursery, many develop a useful understanding of letters and their associated sounds. As they move through the school, many pupils begin to recognise familiar words well and use strategies, such as referring to pictures and graphics effectively to help understand a story. By Year 2, many pupils gather information from non-fiction texts usefully, for example to develop their understanding of sea creatures affected by pollution in the oceans. They read skilfully using relevant expression to convey the meaning of the text and talk confidently about events in stories.

Many pupils develop their mark making and writing skills effectively. Many in the reception class begin to write short sentences independently using the beginning and end sounds of words well. Many older pupils write longer pieces and use adjectives creatively, for example describing a hat as 'soft and twinkly'. By Year 2, most pupils write in different formats creatively, such as letters and lists. Many use simple similes in their poems to enhance their work imaginatively. For example, they describe their special person as 'she feels like a warm summer breeze'. Most pupils develop their awareness of punctuation effectively, using capital letters and full stops accurately. A majority of pupils use their literacy skills in other areas of learning successfully. For example, pupils in Year 1 write about their melting chocolate experiment in relevant detail.

Nearly all pupils make purposeful progress in their mathematical understanding and many are beginning to recognise patterns and relationships between numbers. For example, many Year 1 pupils apply their knowledge of number bonds to 10 to help them work out bonds to 20 correctly. Many pupils develop their problem solving skills well and choose the correct way to approach a problem. In Year 2, they gather and record data from a range of sources and record it effectively in block graphs. For example, they collect information on different fruits and identify the most and least

popular fruit in the café. By Year 2, many pupils use a variety of estimation and checking strategies to measure different objects accurately, for example measuring toys that represent different types of creatures that live in the sea.

Across the school, most pupils have strong information communication and technology (ICT) skills, which they use confidently to support them in all areas of learning. Nearly all reception pupils programme a toy successfully to make it move around toy animals to get a piece of fruit. Older pupils use tablet computers confidently for a worthwhile range of purposes, for example to take photographs of their small world play to sequence a story and support their writing.

Many pupils develop their Welsh skills effectively as they move through the school. In nursery, they sing Welsh songs confidently and respond to simple commands well. By Year 2, they reply to, and follow instructions accurately and answer simple questions about familiar situations, using key phrases and relevant vocabulary. For example, they speak confidently about the foods they like and dislike.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning and playing with friends. They are confident that they can talk to any member of staff or to a friend if they are upset or worried. These strong relationships and the secure environment helps them feel safe and happy in school.

Most pupils participate in school activities enthusiastically. Nearly all have a good awareness of how they can play their part in helping others and the environment. For example, pupils organise a beach clean in the locality and work independently to conserve energy and water in the school. Older pupils understand and promote fairness and global issues actively. For example, they help those less fortunate than them by raising money for a school in Peru. Nearly all pupils take on leadership roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. For example, the pupils' 'Missio' group meets regularly and installed a worry tree where pupils share their concerns, and a 'chill out' area where pupils can have quiet time on the yard.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of being healthy. For example, they explain well that having too much sugary food or drink is bad for you and know that exercise helps them to stay fit. They enjoy exercising in the outdoors and at play times. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. They understand the importance of not giving out personal information while online and explain how to report concerns and issues using the 'Hector the dolphin' tool on the Welsh Government's Hwb digital learning platform.

Nearly all pupils behave well in class and around the school. They demonstrate kindness towards one another in the classroom and at playtimes. Nearly all interact kindly with different age groups across the school. Older pupils support others effectively as 'playground buddies' to help ensure that younger pupils are not lonely at break times.

Many pupils settle quickly in lessons and show interest in their work. They contribute successfully to their own learning, for example choosing to study the topic of 'Under the Sea'. Most work effectively with adult supervision. They use a range of skills to solve problems in maths and think carefully about concepts, such as what it means to be wise. However, a few pupils do not focus well enough on independent tasks or allow others to speak without interruption.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers plan a broad range of engaging learning experiences that stimulate the interests of most pupils well. They consider carefully topical matters that help pupils gain a beneficial insight into important issues, such as eating healthily, and reducing waste and pollution. Most teachers question pupils adeptly. They ask a broad range of questions that help further pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most teachers plan a beneficial balance between adult-led and independent learning activities that take place inside and outdoors. However, they do not always ensure that independent activities challenge pupils well enough. Support staff work with pupils beneficially. They intervene sensitively in pupils' play and provide skilful guidance to individuals and groups. As a result, nearly all pupils that work with an adult make strong progress in learning sessions.

During learning activities, teachers provide pupils with clear and useful oral feedback. This helps most to complete tasks successfully and make purposeful improvements to their work when needed. During language and literacy activities, teachers provide clear success criteria that help most pupils evaluate their own activities and complete tasks competently. However, they do not do this consistently enough in other areas of learning.

The planned curriculum provides an interesting variety of enriching learning experiences. Teachers structure lessons around a broad range of topics that engage pupils well and include pupils purposefully in deciding on and planning topics. For example, pupils in Year 2 chose to study 'Space' as a theme. As a result, most pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment to the learning experiences on offer.

All teachers ensure that pupils have valuable opportunities to learn through active play, in line with the ethos and principles of the foundation phase. They plan learning carefully so that pupils build skills and knowledge systematically, and engage in relevant outdoor challenges in a stimulating and attractive environment. For example, nursery pupils develop their understanding of books and reading well in the outdoor 'Cosy Corner' and improve their physical skills effectively riding bikes and scooters around a well-defined painted road. Pupils in Year 1 improve their creative skills effectively in the mud kitchen, making a 'yucky recipe' for a bird feeder to keep away the 'pesky seagulls'. As a result of these engaging opportunities, most pupils make good progress.

Teachers plan a suitable range of adult-led opportunities to help develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, independent activities do not always give purposeful enough opportunity for pupils to practise and apply these important skills. Teachers develop pupils' ICT skills effectively. They teach these skills effectively and then plan a broad range of opportunities for pupils to use their understanding

throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 use tablet computers to create useful bar charts to show how many sea creatures will fit in a fish tank.

As part of the pioneer schools' project, teachers have developed different approaches to teaching mathematics. For example, they plan the teaching of mathematical development in blocks of work where pupils focus on a concept for an extended period. This contributes successfully to the effective progress that pupils make in this curriculum area.

Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' Welsh language skills. They incorporate the language successfully into most lessons and whole school activities, such as collective worship. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of key sentence patterns and vocabulary progressively and effectively. However, they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to speak Welsh outside the lessons.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to visit local areas of interest and local businesses to support their learning. For example, pupils visit the local heritage park to enhance their understanding of local history. Teaching staff offer a wide variety of clubs to develop further pupils' understanding and their enjoyment of learning. For example, pupils in Year 2 develop their numeracy skills well by taking part in a maths club and broaden their language skills enthusiastically in Spanish club.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Staff have strong working relationships with parents and offer them a beneficial range of opportunities to be involved in school life, such as weekly family learning sessions and speech and language workshops. The school communicates well with parents and provides useful advice for them on other matters, such as how to make a healthy lunch box. This beneficial partnership has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing. Reports to parents provide useful information on pupils' progress in language, mathematics and religious education. However, they do not report well enough on other areas of foundation phase learning.

Arrangements for identifying and responding to pupils' individual needs are effective. Staff monitor and assess pupils early in their school life and provide effective support when needed, for example to help their language development. Leaders have introduced comprehensive systems for tracking the progress and wellbeing of all pupils as they move through the school. Teachers use this information well to help inform their lesson planning and to consider the progress of groups of learners. They identify and plan support for groups and individuals accordingly, for example numeracy support sessions. These systems help to ensure that nearly all pupils make good progress.

Staff measure carefully the effect of support and intervention programmes on the achievement of pupils with additional needs. They work closely with a wide range of specialists, including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists to plan suitable programmes for particular pupils when needed.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves

safe and live a healthy lifestyle. For example, the school's 'sportathon' helps pupils to understand the importance of physical exercise to staying fit. Carefully planned visits, for example by fire safety officers, promote pupils' safety well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school ensures that pupils have worthwhile opportunities to take on responsibilities and play a part in school life and the local community. For example, pupils take part in community events, such as leading the Easter play in the local church and this helps them to develop their awareness of their wider community. The 'cwiw cymraeg' help promote the importance of the Welsh language effectively. For example, they lead daily class sessions and send home Welsh activities for families to complete, such as word searches and caring for 'Bryn the bear'. Staff ensure that pupils are involved well in making decisions about school life. For example, when developing outdoor provision, pupils' input led to the building of a wigwam and a worry tree.

The curriculum and wider school life promote pupils' spirituality effectively. Teaching focuses on the importance of love and respect in today's society. Visits by local religious leaders and close association with the local church help pupils to reflect on their own beliefs.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have established and shared a clear vision based on the school's Christian ethos and on developing pupils as independent, ambitious learners. This vision gives clear and coherent direction to leaders' actions when developing the school's priorities. Senior leaders are developing the leadership roles of staff more broadly. As a result, a wide range of staff take responsibility well for contributing to the school's strategic priorities. For example, the coordinator for additional learning needs ensures that those pupils who need extra support benefit from a worthwhile range of intervention strategies. This contributes positively the progress that these pupils make.

Leaders ensure that meetings for senior leaders and staff consider important elements of the school's work, such as actions needed to ensure that staff implement training effectively. As a result, all staff understand the expectations placed upon them well and take positive actions to implement new strategies effectively.

Leaders support and contribute to national priorities well. For example, the school continues to work productively towards the development of the mathematics and numeracy area of the new curriculum. Leaders work diligently with other schools both within and outside of the pioneer network. They research and trial new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and share their findings well.

Governors support the school conscientiously. They visit regularly and contribute positively to important elements of the school's work. For example, they help leaders monitor and improve school attendance usefully. However, their visits do not focus well enough on gaining an insight into the standards achieved, and the progress made, by pupils. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and contribute suitably to self-evaluation processes and to setting improvement priorities. However, they do not always offer an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders.

Leaders plan a purposeful range of activities that help them to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. These include the analysis of performance information, the evaluation of teaching and the scrutiny of pupils' learning. Using their evaluations, leaders plan a beneficial range of improvement strategies. These focus on improving standards well. For example, their introduction of 'green for go and red for stop' means that most pupils now use basic punctuation more accurately. However, they do not always identify well enough how they will measure the success of their actions.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive worthwhile professional learning opportunities. They link these, and the performance management of staff, to whole school priorities well. For example, training in strategies to help staff identify nursery pupils who need additional help with language development allows them to support these pupils effectively. As a result of beneficial professional development, many improvement strategies are successful and improve both provision and standards.

Governors and leaders manage the school's finances suitably. They ensure that the school has suitable resources to support learning and allocate funds to enable improvement strategies carefully. As a result, pupils learn and play in an engaging environment. For example, the outdoor area in the nursery provides a stimulating learning environment with plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop physical and creative skills. The school has enough teachers to deliver an engaging curriculum and a suitable number of well-trained support staff who make a notable contribution to pupils' learning. However, governors have overseen a significant budget surplus that has existed over a number of years with no strategic purpose. The school uses the pupil development grant to provide valuable individual and group support for vulnerable learners, which develops their skills and wellbeing effectively.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2019: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 18/03/2019