



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 Catholic and Anglican Secondary School  
Sontley Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 7EN**

**Date of inspection: February 2020**

**by**

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

## **About St Joseph's Catholic and Anglican Secondary School**

St Joseph's Anglican and Catholic High School is a 11-16 English-medium shared church school in Wrexham. There are currently 732 pupils on roll compared with 698 pupils at the time of the last inspection in 2014.

Around 8.8% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average of 16.4%. Around 16% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. Most pupils speak English as their first language and only a very few pupils speak Welsh at home. A few pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups, these include mobile populations and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school receives pupils from the full ability range. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is around 10.8%, significantly below the national average of 23%. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is around 2.1%, slightly below the national average of 2.2%.

As a Curriculum for Wales quality improvement school, they are trialling learning methods in readiness for the new developments.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2017. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher and four assistant headteachers.

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 Anglican and Catholic High School is an inclusive, caring and very supportive learning community. The Anglican and Catholic ethos, which states 'No child is left behind', is fundamental to all aspects of school life. Nearly all pupils demonstrate particularly high standards of behaviour in class and around the school and are exceptionally polite, respectful and courteous to others. Many make strong progress in lessons.

Nearly all teachers foster positive working relationships with their pupils and have well established classroom routines that create a positive and engaging learning environment.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school to provide pupils with a high quality education in a caring, supportive Christian environment. They have been successful in supporting improvements in pupil outcomes, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance as well as reducing impact of poverty and developing pupils' Welsh language skills. The well-structured professional dialogue between leaders and all members of staff ensures that their knowledge, expertise and skills are developed through beneficial professional learning opportunities.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

R1 Ensure that the teaching meets the needs of all pupils and improve the quality and impact of written feedback

R2 Improve provision for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum

## **What happens next**

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

In lessons and over time, many pupils make secure progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They recall well prior learning, for example using their understanding of similar words to learn new vocabulary in languages lessons. However, in a few cases, pupils do not have a sound enough understanding of basic subject concepts.

Nearly all pupils listen to the teacher and to their peers with attention and respect. This supports their learning effectively. Many pupils speak with fluency and coherence. They enjoy engaging in discussion thoughtfully, sharing their views with confidence. A minority express their views particularly eloquently. These pupils offer perceptive answers to questions using a wide range of vocabulary, for example when discussing the difference between migration and population change in geography. However, a few pupils do not extend their responses sufficiently. They provide simplistic answers and do not expand on their ideas. Often this is because of a lack of limited questioning from their teachers. A notable strength is the confidence and creativity that the pupils in the 'Enfys' resource base display when discussing their ideas to create their own 'reading dens' to read for pleasure.

Many pupils skim and scan suitably to locate information. They have sound retrieval techniques and can select relevant information to inform their conclusions for example, in history when evaluating the reliability of sources when learning about the working conditions in a mill during the industrial revolution. A minority of pupils show strong analysis skills when responding to complex texts to find implied meanings. For example, in English when discussing the character Lenny in 'Of Mice and Men', they make sensitive and astute comments. A minority of pupils do not develop their responses to texts well enough. They provide simplistic answers when interpreting meaning, relying on basic comprehension skills rather than, for instance, reflecting on the intention of the writer and the impact of language techniques.

Many pupils produce writing that is mostly technically secure and make good use of subject specific terminology in a variety of subjects. They write well for an appropriate range of purposes and audiences, for example creating a story of the journey of the river Severn in geography or in drama when evaluating Brecht's techniques. However, a few pupils' writing lacks structure and they make frequent spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. A few more able pupils produce extended writing of high quality, with effective use of adventurous vocabulary and sophisticated literary techniques, for example when they write about isolation and "running scared" in English.

Most pupils have sound number skills and are confident applying these in context within mathematics. For example, they use similarity to calculate the dimensions of coffee tables for a furniture maker and the dimensions of cake layers for a baker. When given the opportunity, many pupils apply their numeracy skills well across the curriculum. For example, in geography, a few pupils rearrange formulae and solve numerical problems such as calculations of composition of ores suitably. A majority of pupils construct graphs to display data, using correct axis and scales of their own choice. However, only a minority analyse and interpret these to draw conclusions.

Pupils generally develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately across the curriculum. A majority employ these skills collaboratively with their peers. For example in physical education, pupils compile video analyses to evaluate their techniques in dance and athletics. In a few subjects, pupils make use of more advanced ICT skills. For example, they develop their ability to manipulate photographs. Overall, pupils do not develop their ICT skills increasingly across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop their creative skills well. For example, in drama, pupils create an ensemble photograph of their characters to capture and create still images and find a caption to support each image. The majority of pupils are able to develop original ideas imaginatively when they are required to reflect the style of particular artists. For example, pupils create original and exceptional drawings of the seascape in Anglesey inspired by Janet Bell. When given the opportunity, the majority of pupils develop their thinking skills effectively, for example in history when explaining the links between the causes of crime in the United Kingdom in each century. In general, pupils develop their physical skills well and are confident when participating in practical lessons, showing high levels of independence, for example when practising foundation shapes and balances pertinent to vaulting, to assist them to demonstrate a safe landing from a jump.

At key stage 4, most pupils are entered for a level 2 GCSE qualification in Welsh as a second language and many succeed. The majority of pupils have a firm grasp of the language. They use a suitable range of subject-specific vocabulary appropriately when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of being bilingual. All pupils are able to speak extremely well. They produce well-structured writing with an effective use of a range of tenses when discussing topics such as their holidays and pastimes.

Over the last three years, performance at key stage 4 has improved. In 2019, performance was strong with pupils performing above expectations in most indicators. Nearly all pupils are entered and achieve well above expectations in the skills challenge certificate. The performance of all groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, generally compares well with that of their counterparts in similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs make strong progress. Nearly all pupils progress to education, training or employment at the end of Year 11.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent**

Pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning are an extremely strong feature of St Joseph's Catholic and Anglican High School. Nearly all pupils take pride in their school and the local area. They benefit significantly from the calm, purposeful and caring ethos that permeates the school community. They feel safe and secure at school and know whom to approach if they need support. Most pupils feel valued and that the school responds effectively to any concerns raised. They enjoy coming to school and attendance rates over the last three years are above those of similar schools.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate exemplary high standards of behaviour in class and around the school. These pupils are exceptionally polite, respectful and courteous to each other, teachers and visitors to the school. They develop strong working relationships with peers, teachers and other adults. These strengths contribute to

pupils developing a strong sense of empathy and a greater understanding of cultural and religious diversity through interactions with their peers.

Nearly all pupils are punctual, settle to their work promptly and show diligence when completing tasks. Most demonstrate particularly positive attitudes to their learning and show a genuine interest in the topics that they study and display pride in their work. They work very effectively in groups and pairs, give careful consideration to the contributions of others and support each other successfully.

Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, are eager to take on responsibilities within the school. They influence aspects of school life, through the school council 'Senedd', for example in introducing healthy eating options in the restaurant. Most pupils show care and concern for others making valuable contributions to the community through local and national charities. They have organised numerous events and collected a significant amount of money and resources, for example donations to the local Foodbank, hospice and charities such as Red Cross and Christian Aid.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of how to stay safe online and following a healthy lifestyle. Participation rates in the extensive extra-curricular programme, which includes a wide range of sporting, academic and cultural activities, are very high.

Over the last three years, attendance has been strong, and is well above that in similar schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Nearly all teachers foster positive working relationships with their pupils. They have well-established classroom routines that create a positive and engaging learning environment. These aspects contribute to the strong progress that many pupils make in lessons.

Many teachers use their strong subject knowledge purposefully to plan well-structured lessons that engage pupils positively. These teachers design and use resources that are interesting and suitably challenging. Many teachers give clear, helpful instructions and explanations. As a result, pupils build on their prior learning and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well.

In the few lessons where pupils make strong and rapid progress, teachers are enthusiastic and display a passion for their subject. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and ask incisive questions. This entices and engages pupils purposefully with their learning inviting them to explore, share and develop their ideas and understanding.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan activities well enough to support pupils of all abilities. A minority of teachers over direct the learning of pupils, which limits their opportunities to think and work independently. In a few instances, teachers do not challenge pupils of all abilities well enough. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are not engaged fully and do not make enough progress.

In most lessons, teachers provide valuable verbal feedback and praise during the lesson. They move around the classroom carefully to monitor pupils' progress, and intervene purposefully where necessary. This helps many pupils to make strong

progress and develop their confidence well. A majority of teachers ask incisive questions that probe and extend pupils' thinking. However, in a minority of cases, teachers ask questions to check recall only.

Overall, written feedback does not consistently support pupils to improve the quality of their work or develop their understanding. Teachers do not always explain how the pupils should improve their work clearly enough. They do not offer pupils beneficial opportunities to respond to feedback and improve the quality of their work. In a few books, feedback is superficial.

The school provides a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils of all abilities successfully. School leaders plan a comprehensive key stage 4 curriculum offer, taking into account pupils' interests and opinions. In addition, the school collaborates with local providers to extend the range of qualifications offered at key stage 4 effectively, for example computer science, engineering, and hair and beauty courses. The most able pupils in key stage 3 participate in local arrangements as part of the 'Pre-Seren' programme to enrich their learning. These include valuable activities such as mathematics booster projects and creative writing programmes. In addition, groups of more able pupils in Years 9 and 10 participate in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sessions that focus on developing computational thinking skills. These worthwhile approaches offer pupils a range of opportunities to broaden their learning experiences. The school provides a wide range of beneficial extra-curricular opportunities to enrich the curriculum, for example the bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme in partnership with the Urdd.

As a 'quality improvement school', teachers are trialling learning methods and planning purposefully for the Curriculum for Wales. They are successfully exploring different pedagogies such as the use of 'manipulatives' and 'mastery' approaches in mathematics to help to develop mathematical fluency.

The school has a beneficial range of intervention opportunities to support pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. A minority of subject areas provide useful opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Examples include the use of higher order skills of deduction and inference to evaluate different sources relating to crime and punishment in history and the analysis of data to set training goals to optimise performance in physical education. However, planning for and co-ordination of the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum do not focus sharply enough on the quality of provision. The planning for the progressive development of pupils' ICT skills is in the very early stages of development.

The school has an exemplary attitude to developing pupils' grasp of the Welsh language and places importance on its place within the local community and Wales. Welsh language and culture are celebrated widely across the school. Staff provide exceptional opportunities for pupil bilingual ambassadors to support the language acquisition of peers, teachers and support staff. For example, in 'Welshness Week', the pupil bilingual ambassadors are successfully supported to teach Welsh to primary school pupils. In addition, there is very effective use of Welsh in the registration period, to question and immerse the classes in the language in a natural



environment. As a result, most pupils and staff confidently use their Welsh language skills spontaneously within the school day.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The school ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inherent in all aspects of school life successfully. The extremely caring and supportive ethos of the school supports pupils' wellbeing and promotes positive attitudes to learning very effectively. Whole-school assemblies, tutorial periods and visiting speakers enhance pupils' understanding of their culture and sense of community. A notable strength is how form tutors provide a safe and calm environment for vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers and succeed.

The school has extensive systems to track and review pupils' progress and wellbeing that are evaluated thoroughly. These approaches include the highly effective monitoring of less able pupils' progress to ensure that all pupils are challenged to achieve the best outcomes. The tracking of pupils to whom English is an additional language is also a particular strength. These pupils are supported exceptionally well and make very good progress as a result of thorough arrangements for improving language acquisition. The school tracks and monitors attendance meticulously and promotes attendance via weekly bulletins and rewards. As a result, attendance has improved year-on-year and is well above that of similar schools.

The school has a wide range of purposeful, personalised support programmes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) that are reviewed regularly so that interventions are closely matched to pupils' needs. For example, SEN pupils follow very effective alternative learning pathways to ensure all pupils leave school with a range of appropriate qualifications which includes small animal care and hospitality and catering. Vulnerable pupils attend the 'ECO Centre', an offsite provision, to develop social skills and self-esteem. This has had a very positive impact on pupil progress and wellbeing. Comprehensive individual education plans (IEP) include teaching and learning strategies and are accessible to all staff. The school has also developed highly personalised 'one-page profiles' written by and with pupils to further support their learning.

The school has developed strong and creative links with the local community. In particular, it works with the local authority health team, the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the local chaplains to support pupils' wellbeing and mental health. The school is highly successful in encouraging all pupils to participate actively in the life of the school and wider community, for example in holding charity events, and in leading on 'Together Creating Communities' group and the school council 'Senedd'. These, along with opportunities to be prefects and subject ambassadors, help pupils to develop strong leadership skills, and learn about the importance of participation, responsibility and accountability.

There are very strong links with parents to help them support their child's learning and wellbeing. To assist pupils in their learning, the school produces a range of supportive activities, for example teaching parents how to support pupils with mathematics GCSE revision. The school also communicates very effectively regarding attitudes to learning and progress. Purposeful and personalised interim

and annual reports keep parents well informed. The comprehensive advice and guidance for pupils and their parents at transition points helps them make informed choices about subject options and career pathways.

The school has a relevant and well-co-ordinated personal and social education (PSE) programme, which enables pupils to make positive decisions regarding their own health and wellbeing. In addition, this programme reinforces the school's values very well and supports the personal development of pupils. This is well supported by outside agencies, such as the school's police liaison officer, CAMHS and the Samaritans. Furthermore, the annual whole-school health days are a highly creative method of developing pupils' social skills.

The school has very strong arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. There is an extensive and valuable range of activities that improves pupils' understanding of healthy life-style choices, the value of physical exercise and importance of mental wellbeing. These include a wide variety of extra-curricular sports activities and cultural clubs such as art and coding.

The annual residential retreats are highly regarded by pupils and parents are a notable strength. Every year group is afforded the opportunity to attend. These opportunities strengthen and nurture pupils' gospel values and allow them to reflect and flourish.

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

### **Leadership and management: Good**

Since his appointment in 2017, the headteacher has established a clear vision with appropriate strategic aims that focus on meeting every pupils' needs. He provides secure leadership and wholehearted commitment to creating a school that fulfils his vision that 'No child is left behind'. This ensures that the school nurtures, cares and supports pupils highly effectively to achieve the best academic and wellbeing outcomes for themselves. The headteacher has communicated the vision clearly to staff, governors, parents and pupils.

The senior leadership team support the headteacher well and together they deliver the school's strategic aims effectively. The assistant headteachers' responsibilities are distributed equitably and other staff understand them clearly. However, currently there are too many responsibilities assumed by the headteacher.

Many middle leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and how they contribute to delivering the school's strategic priorities. Heads of year in particular are effective in securing high standards of pupil wellbeing

Senior leaders hold middle leaders to account well. Through effective line management arrangements, they support and challenge on important aspects such as pupils' standards. Leaders follow up most action points from the 'support and challenge meetings' successfully in subsequent meetings. The headteacher deals with underperformance of staff robustly and promptly.

Leaders have been successful in addressing many national priorities such as reducing impact of poverty and developing pupils' Welsh language skills. Strategic planning for development of pupils' reading skills and their high order ICT skills is less well developed.

The governing body is experienced and provides useful challenge to the school through 'support and challenge' committees where they hold senior and middle leaders to account. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the information provided by the headteacher. They contribute well to setting the strategic direction for the school.

The school's self-evaluation processes enable staff at all levels to have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Many leaders analyse pupil performance data well to identify clear areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to inform planning at whole school and departmental level. The school has a comprehensive calendar of activities to evaluate the school's work including regular classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. In these activities, leaders identify accurately strengths and areas for development. Leaders share these findings effectively with staff at morning briefings, departmental meetings, leadership meetings and support and challenge sessions. The school canvasses the opinions of pupils and parents well. Leaders act upon their views suitably, for example changing the location of a water fountain for pupils and the format of written reports to parents.

The school uses information from self-evaluation well to plan for improvements at whole school level. Leaders identify meaningful priorities and plan appropriate actions to address them. These include actions to improve teaching, developing leaders and improving standards. The majority of curriculum leaders plan appropriately to address priorities specific to the department. A minority of curriculum leaders lack clarity in planning for improvement. They set success criteria that are not always measurable and list tasks to be completed without enough consideration of their intended impact.

Over time, leaders have secured improvements in pupil performance and in 2019, pupils performed better than expected in all performance measures. However, there are a very few areas of the school's work where leadership has not led to sufficient improvements, such as in the quality of teaching to meet the needs of all learners and in written feedback

Performance management arrangements are detailed. They identify the professional development needs of teaching staff well and link closely with the school's professional development programmes. The targets agreed by staff link closely with whole school and departmental priorities.

The school has suitable processes to identify and support the professional learning of all staff. A notable feature is the well-structured professional dialogue held by the headteacher and assistant headteacher with all members of staff to plan their professional learning needs. The school has a beneficial range of professional learning opportunities for all staff to develop their knowledge, expertise and skills. These include collaboration in evidence-based activities to share good practice within and across local schools.

The school uses its resources effectively and has created a purposeful, caring environment that is conducive to learning. The headteacher, finance officer and finance committee monitor school finances and resources robustly. Over the last five years, the school has succeeded in recording budget surpluses that comply fully with the authority's guidelines on school reserves. They are spent astutely. There are comprehensive planning arrangements to maintain the school's stable financial position for the short term.

Well-qualified and experienced staff provide purposeful quality teaching and high-quality pastoral support. Within the classroom, teaching assistants give effective and caring support to pupils.

Leaders use the pupil development grant and the school's own funds skilfully to maximise opportunities for vulnerable pupils, including those entitled to free school meals. They make good progress in their learning and participate fully in the life of the school. The school has created an environment and culture whereby vulnerable pupils benefit from activities in school outside normal school hours. For example, they take part in instrumental tuition, 'study+' sessions and the early morning physical education clubs.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	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:

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Publication date: 29/04/2020