



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

St Therese's R.C. School

**Southdown Road
Sandfields
Port Talbot
SA12 7HL**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

About St Therese's R.C. School

Name of provider	St Therese's R.C. School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Roman Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	236
Pupils of statutory school age	165
Number in nursery classes	40
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%)	30.6%
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%)	19.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2014
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

During her first year, the headteacher has established a vision and aims for the school which centre around developing pupils' life skills and positive well-being. All leaders provide strong support to realise the school's aims. There are warm, respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, resulting in a calm, collaborative culture in lessons.

There is a strong focus on everybody's well-being in the school. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils' learning and social development. The Family Engagement Worker (FEW) supports families very effectively to improve attendance and parental engagement in school life. Most pupils are courteous and welcoming and nearly all pupils who are new to the school settle in well. Most pupils feel safe in school, and they know who to go to if they need help.

Staff work together to provide a curriculum that engages pupils successfully and meets their learning needs effectively. Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Recent improvements to provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have a good impact on the standards pupils achieve. However, the school needs to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise writing at length and in different ways. Teachers enhance the curriculum with interesting trips and visitors to school. There are opportunities for pupils to hear the Welsh language daily. Although most pupils participate in Welsh lessons enthusiastically, their confidence to speak Welsh in simple conversations is underdeveloped.

The school encourages pupils to play an active part in helping others in school and in the local community through the active pupil groups. These groups influence decisions that affect all pupils in the school, but older pupils do not make enough decisions about their own learning in lessons. There is a range of worthwhile extra-curricular opportunities on offer and regular opportunities to take physical exercise and learn about being healthy during the school day.

Recommendations

- R1 Increase pupils' opportunities to write at length across the curriculum
- R2 Improve pupils' spoken Welsh around the school
- R3 Ensure that pupils make decisions about how and what they learn in lessons

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations of the inspection.

Main evaluation

Learning

When they start in nursery, a majority of pupils have knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their chronological age. From their starting points, most pupils make good progress overall, including those with additional learning needs and those who are eligible for free school meals.

During their time at the school, the youngest pupils develop their listening skills well. They enjoy hearing stories and rhymes, and they respond to teachers' questions confidently. Many take turns in conversation and listen to others' contributions.

As they move through the school, most older pupils listen purposefully, respecting and building on other pupils' ideas and opinions. Many listen carefully in class reading time. They discuss what is read aloud and justify their opinions, showing their understanding of what they have listened to.

Most pupils make good progress with their reading skills. Most younger pupils develop phonic knowledge successfully, which helps them to work out unfamiliar words. Many pupils become confident readers. A minority recognise alliteration when they read for information in a simple text.

Older pupils read for pleasure and discuss their favourite authors. They talk about the genre of the book and choose to read for information or because they enjoy a mystery or a book with humour. Many read well, and more able pupils use inference to work out meaning that is implied in the text.

Most pupils become confident speakers who enjoy talking to visitors. Many younger pupils offer answers to questions when in a group. In role play, they take on roles such as the wolf in the Three Little Pigs, using the language they have heard in their story session. Most older pupils participate fully in class discussions. Many present their work to the class or address pupils and staff in assemblies with confidence. Most explain their work in detail, giving reasons for being proud of it.

Many younger pupils use letter sounds well to develop early writing skills. They begin to write a few letters to represent words. For example, they write an invitation to a pirate party and list the food that will be there. Over time, many pupils refine their writing skills, becoming confident when writing simple sentences independently to make their own books or to answer questions about a text in comprehension tasks.

In literacy tasks, most older pupils write answers independently, such as when they analyse poetic features in an extract from a novel. Many older pupils spell and punctuate with suitable accuracy. When they write at length and edit their work, a majority of pupils improve their writing by adding more adventurous vocabulary or grammar.

Pupils' numeracy skills build systematically during their time at the school. Most younger pupils estimate and count objects within twenty and order the numbers from smallest to largest accurately. Most go on to work accurately using numbers within a

hundred. Most add or subtract ten from a given number. Many choose healthy foods from the 'Super Healthy Hero' shop and give change from two pounds accurately.

Many older pupils use previous knowledge to explain their work in maths. Most multiply and divide accurately using larger numbers and solve basic problems. Most apply their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum. For example, when investigating how quickly sugar dissolves in drinks, they work out differences in temperatures and record results in a bar graph. Many pupils measure length in centimetres and metres accurately, a few using decimal points.

Across the school, most pupils greet visitors enthusiastically in Welsh. Most respond to familiar commands and instructions in Welsh. Many younger pupils recognise the names of colours and count objects up to five.

Most older pupils join in with singing a Welsh hymn. A minority understand the Welsh patterns they hear in Welsh sessions in a different context. For example, a minority of older pupils answer simple questions about the weather. However, many pupils lack the confidence to participate in simple conversations in Welsh or use Welsh incidentally around the school.

Pupils' digital skills develop well overall. Many younger pupils control a programmable toy successfully. Most save and retrieve files independently. Most older pupils create simple spreadsheets. For example, when thinking about transition to secondary school, they work out the cost of a future ski trip using a spreadsheet. Most create slideshows to share information or research. For example, they make a presentation to help other pupils to know about their rights or to teach younger pupils about plastic pollution. The oldest pupils create and manipulate a simple database, for example to record information about lakes in Wales.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are courteous and welcoming to visitors. Most pupils show regular care and consideration for each other. They behave well in classrooms and when moving around the school.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and beneficial. This enables nearly all pupils to engage in learning and to develop as confident contributors to school life. Most pupils show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and very caring ethos. They feel that adults in the school listen to their views carefully and take them into account when considering whole-school decisions that affect them.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, take pride in their work, show keen levels of interest in lessons, and talk enthusiastically about school life. They listen attentively to teachers and concentrate well on their work, for example when older pupils give each other instructions on what to measure and find the area of different objects around the school. They collaborate successfully in groups and in pairs and most make positive contributions to class discussions. As a result, nearly all pupils demonstrate a good level of respect for the contributions of others. Many pupils develop as confident and independent learners. However, older pupils do not make enough decisions about how to set out their work or what to include.

Most pupils draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being successfully. For example, pupils experiencing personal difficulties work with support staff in the sensory room to resolve issues amicably. Most pupils develop effective independent skills in practical activities, such as accessing and using resources confidently around the classroom and in outdoor areas. For example, older pupils choose junk material to make their own mascots as part of work on sustainability.

Most pupils are sensible and caring in their dealings with others and demonstrate a good understanding of their own and other pupils' needs and rights. Nearly all pupils show a strong awareness of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society.

Nearly all pupils take an active part in the life of the school. The pupil voice groups are very inclusive. Group representatives demonstrate good leadership skills. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and feel proud of their valuable contributions. This includes making presentations to governors and classes on matters that are important to them, such as the rights of all children. For example, pupils give suggestions for activities for 'Feel Good Fridays'. These ideas enhance provision and pupils' engagement and help improve well-being and attendance.

Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who are eligible for free school meals, take on leadership roles and responsibilities confidently. They play a full part in the life and work of the school, for example as members of the 'Eco Team', the 'Community team', or the 'Well-being team'. These groups influence a range of aspects of school life, for example healthy eating initiatives and creating alternative routes to school. Many pupils begin to develop entrepreneurial skills, such as deciding to sell lollipops during hot weather. Pupil voice groups also contribute through social enterprise. For example, the Eco Team have arranged litter picks around the community, at the local beach and around school.

Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the importance of good physical and mental well-being. Most understand the benefits of physical exercise on their health, such as participating in the daily mile around the school grounds and in the numerous team sports offered by the school. Pupils who participate in after-school sports clubs explain the importance of regular exercise effectively and its positive impact on their health and general fitness. Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily. The Well-being team encourage others to eat fruit at breaktimes successfully.

Most pupils understand the need to be careful when using the internet, including the importance of using passwords safely. Nearly all pupils are keen to share what they learn about e-safety. This awareness impacts positively on their well-being, safety, and general life skills.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum centres helpfully around the four purposes for the Curriculum for Wales and successfully begins to provide pupils with the skills they need for later life. Teachers work hard to make the curriculum engaging and relevant for their pupils, linking learning activities to meaningful contexts. For example, prior to

transferring to the secondary school, older pupils look at maps and calculate the distance to their next school and the time it will take them to travel there. They work out how to purchase lunch items within a set weekly budget.

There are useful links to the local community that help pupils to develop as ethically informed citizens. For example, younger pupils create artwork to display in a local care home for a coffee morning and pupils consider how they can be a healthy hero by helping others. Pupils undertake activities such as singing for senior citizens or litter-picking to contribute to their local area.

The curriculum places beneficial importance on developing pupils' health and well-being. All pupils have daily opportunities to log their own feelings. They learn about the importance of healthy attitudes and lifestyles and have regular opportunities to participate in exercise and outdoor activities. For example, younger pupils visit a local rock-climbing centre to learn to be brave whilst taking risks within a safe environment, and older pupils enjoy a residential visit to undertake outdoor pursuits.

Staff provide opportunities for pupils to practise using Welsh language patterns in daily Welsh sessions as well as working with Welsh artists and musicians to understand aspects of Welsh heritage. Through learning about Welsh culture and the local area, pupils begin to understand the diverse nature of Wales. Older pupils take part in Welsh food tasting. They also visit a Japanese restaurant to find out about different ingredients and food from other countries. However, Welsh language teaching does not ensure that pupils can use the language independently enough.

The school promotes each individual pupil's sense of identity and respect for everybody's rights effectively. Staff encourage kindness and enable pupils to reflect on important values. There are opportunities for older pupils to learn about different charities and to contribute to fundraising for good causes. The school supports pupils to make a positive difference to others wherever possible in everyday life. Teachers encourage pupils to become ethically informed citizens through the consideration of thought-provoking questions, such as 'is change a good thing?' Effective questioning in lessons allows pupils to think critically, to consider lifestyle choices and to explore their knowledge and understanding of local and national events.

The school makes effective use of visits and visitors to support pupils' understanding of their community and of the world of work as well as a sense of social responsibility. For example, they have a visitor from the local steelworks to explain how steel is reused and recycled and how this reduces its carbon footprint. There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop digital skills in their learning. Pupils learn about keeping safe online in lessons and with additional support from schools' police liaison officers.

Teachers place strong emphasis on promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have opportunities to use their numeracy skills regularly in other curriculum areas. However, in writing, there is an over-reliance on worksheets across the curriculum. This inhibits pupils' opportunities to write at length or in different ways.

Teachers know their pupils well and relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Teachers and teaching assistants use praise and encouragement and manage pupils' behaviour successfully. Teachers plan sequences of lessons to meet

the needs of all their pupils successfully. Teaching assistants support pupils with additional needs very effectively.

Most teachers give pupils useful feedback on their learning during lessons. Most encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and, on occasion, the work of others, so that pupils understand how to make improvements. Nearly all teachers use data effectively to monitor how pupils are progressing in their literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, support and guidance

The school is an inclusive, caring community where everyone's well-being is a priority. This is a strong feature of the school's provision. The supportive and warm atmosphere in the school helps nearly all pupils settle into school life easily and it contributes significantly to pupils' engagement in school and their readiness to learn.

There is a wide range of well-being support for pupils. Teaching assistants provide useful help in dedicated sessions to address emotional and learning needs. Most pupils enjoy taking part in support sessions and, as a result, most targeted pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. The Family Engagement Worker works closely with a wide range of agencies including housing, health workers and social care to support pupils and their families. This collaborative approach supports pupils successfully, allowing them to and engage better in learning.

The school's acting additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) works effectively in partnership with the headteacher and staff members. Together, they ensure that pupils' needs are identified early, and that the tracking and support for individuals and groups of pupils begin promptly. There are systems in place to identify, monitor, and review the progress of pupils with additional learning needs. Termly pupil progress reviews result in staff members having a deeper understanding of pupils' progress. Nearly all teachers set clear, specific targets to support pupils' learning. The clarity and detail of pupils' records is beneficial and ensures that all staff involved with supporting a pupil understand their role. The ALNCO works closely with other ALNCOs in the local authority and local cluster of schools to quality assure individual development plans for pupils.

The school promotes all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The school's values are woven throughout school life. Pupils learn the importance of helping others whenever they can, and staff encourage them to make a positive difference to their community.

The school embraces equality and diversity and provides many opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their own identity, heritage and culture. The school provides a range of opportunities that help pupils to develop a good understanding of their Welsh heritage. Pupils study Welsh legends, sing Welsh songs enthusiastically and celebrate a whole-school Eisteddfod annually. School visitors and extra-curricular activities impact positively on pupils' learning and their understanding of the culture of Wales. There are visitors, for example, from a clog dancer and a harpist, and pupils produce artwork inspired by working with Welsh artist Rhiannon Roberts.

The school also ensures that pupils are aware of world issues and children's rights. Pupils learn empathy and tolerance through understanding that everyone has a right to be safe. For example, pupils led assemblies highlighting the rights of a refugee and exploring the impact of having to leave their home country. Older pupils also attended the local professional football club event 'Show Racism the Red Card,' which led to them designing their own awareness posters.

The school offers a wide range of interesting clubs and activities after school, covering a range of sports, dance, board games, gardening, well-being and Welsh. The school provides worthwhile experiences that enable pupils to take part in performances to develop self-confidence and improve their collaborative skills. For example, they take part in church services, assemblies, Eisteddfodau and Christmas performances for parents.

There is an established system to report any safeguarding concerns and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding with clear arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has high expectations of herself, her staff and pupils in the school. In her first year, she has communicated a clear vision with the support of the governing body, staff and parents. She has established a strong team ethic across the school through maintaining high levels of collaboration and trust. Leaders are positive role models for pupils. They make the Curriculum for Wales a reality through their hard work, passion, and support of one another.

Leaders are fully aware of the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on pupils' attainment and have robust and very effective processes in place to create an inclusive provision for all pupils. Staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of their pupils and the local community and work with commitment to meet these needs. For example, the recently employed Family Engagement Worker has worked well with local authority officers and vulnerable families to improve the attendance of a few persistent absentees. Leaders place a strong emphasis on establishing and upholding a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

The school's work in partnership with parents and external agencies is effective and supports the well-being of pupils and their families successfully. This ensures that parents trust that the school is doing the right thing for their children and that staff will always act in their best interests and work with them sensitively. Parents work with the FEW on their parenting skills, supporting children with learning basic skills and undertaking well-being activities. The school's work in partnership with parents, support agencies and other schools is highly successful.

The structure and distribution of staff roles and responsibilities supports the drive to improve provision. Leaders promote a culture of professional learning to impact on provision and standards positively. For example, five support staff are training to provide enjoyable and educational opportunities for pupils during the school holidays, where pupils will learn to cook and eat healthy meals. The highly effective, whole-

school approach to well-being has enabled all staff to develop a greater understanding of relationships, which has impacted positively on pupil behaviour and in developing each child's potential. Leaders create opportunities for teachers to grow into leadership roles and for support staff to progress their careers. As a result, the school is developing positively as a learning organisation.

Within this learning community there is a shared strategic direction and responsibility for delivering against national and school priorities amongst all staff. Effective teamwork moves these priorities into action successfully. Leaders and staff work collaboratively with other local schools and collectively to improve on teaching strategies and the development of their curriculum.

There is a transparent, effective monitoring cycle of activities to evaluate the success of new initiatives. Leaders undertake these activities robustly to inform themselves of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use a wide range of evidence to evaluate the impact of school initiatives on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. This information enables leaders to agree on future priorities for action.

The school works closely with a range of partners for the benefit of pupils and staff. Specialist agencies such as speech and language, an English as an additional language teacher and education psychologists attend the school regularly to provide direct support and advice that impacts positively on outcomes for pupils. The school supports the development of student teachers and teaching assistants from the local college effectively.

Members of the governing body act as critical friends to the school leadership team. They discharge their duties well over a range of committees and bring expertise to their roles. The headteacher informs governors about pupils' learning regularly and advises them realistically on how to improve provision. They have a good understanding of pupil progress and the school's priorities. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

School leaders and governors manage finances well and make prudent decisions that benefit all pupils. The school uses its grant funding effectively to ensure targeted support for vulnerable pupils in improving their attendance, their language development and to provide them with experiences that they might not otherwise have.

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 inspectio

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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