



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

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 R.C. Primary School
Fairoak Avenue
Newport
Gwent
NP19 8FW**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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Context

Saint Joseph's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school in the Archdiocese of Cardiff. It is situated in a densely populated area to the east of the city of Newport. Its 189 pupils, aged four to 11 years of age, come from a wide range of social backgrounds and represent the full range of ability.

Approximately 9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is lower than local and national averages. Around 18% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), including two with statements of SEN.

Almost all pupils' home language is English with approximately 8% coming from homes where other languages are spoken. No pupils are identified as Welsh speaking and three pupils receive support in English as an additional language. No pupils are looked after by the local authority.

In September 2010 the long-standing headteacher of the school retired. The school is currently led and managed by an acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2011.

The school was last inspected in June 2005. Since this inspection, two new teachers and six support staff have been appointed. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in 2009.

The 2011 individual school budget per pupil at St Joseph's Primary School is £3,031, which compares with a maximum of £6,996 and a minimum of £2,612 for primary schools in Newport. The school has the 38th highest budget per pupil out of the 48 primary schools in Newport.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

St Joseph's is a good school because:

- most pupils achieve good standards and make appropriate progress in their learning;
- nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to their work;
- learning experiences are generally varied and successfully engage many learners;
- teaching is mainly good;
- effective care, support and guidance procedures contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing; and
- governors, senior leaders and staff are committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement have strengths that outweigh areas for development.

The school has gone through a period of transition with a temporary acting headteacher and several new members of the governing body. The acting headteacher has worked effectively with governors, senior leaders and staff to bring about some necessary improvements in pupils' behaviour, standards and wellbeing.

The strengths are that during the last year the school has:

- improved teaching and learning practices in English and mathematics at key stage 1 and key stage 2 and in science at key stage 1;
- used data more effectively to support individual pupils' progress;
- implemented new strategies for managing pupils' behaviour which impact positively upon pupils' wellbeing and the general ethos of the school;
- reviewed and updated many key policies to ensure that there is consistency in practice in the school; and
- strengthened leadership within the school through encouraging joint co-ordination of key areas of the school's life.

However:

- the leadership team has yet to fully develop strategic ways of working;
- self-evaluation is not critical or robust enough to be an effective tool for school improvement; and
- improvement planning does not communicate key strategic priorities well enough.

Recommendations

In order to continue to improve, St. Joseph's needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' Welsh language skills and provision for Cwricwlwm Cymreig;
- R2 refine thematic planning to ensure that there is continuity and progression in pupils' skills;
- R3 ensure that work is well matched to pupils' ability and use marking more effectively to provide guidance on how pupils can improve;
- R4 continue to develop leadership at all levels within the school; and
- R5 ensure that self-evaluation is rigorous and comprehensive, covers all areas of the life and work of the school over time, and leads to clear priorities for action.

What happens next?

St Joseph's RC Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by Estyn.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The achievement and progress of pupils in lessons are generally appropriate for their age and abilities. Most pupils have good recall of previous learning, particularly in English language work, mathematics and science. Pupils work together co-operatively and productively to respond to set tasks and to questions posed by their teachers and other adults. They solve problems and learn from their mistakes. For instance, pupils in Year 1 co-operate effectively to make simple mechanisms in Forest School. Many pupils are skilled at generating questions and ideas. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to contribute ideas about what they should learn.

Most pupils make clear and appropriate progress in their communication skills. They read at an appropriate level for their age and ability and speak clearly and confidently with other pupils and with adults. Most pupils write well and of a good length in a variety of forms in English lessons, although writing across all areas of learning and subjects is less well developed. Pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy and information and communication skills, but these skills are also not used well enough across all curriculum areas.

Most pupils understand the instructions and incidental Welsh used by staff, and are enthusiastic about learning Welsh. However, most pupils do not use incidental Welsh enough unless prompted. Pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh are developing slowly.

Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, for pupils of seven years of age, has been above the average for other schools in its family in 2008 and 2009, but below in 2010. Over the last two years, the level of performance in each core subject has fallen and, in 2010, the school's results placed it in the lower 50% of similar schools for English and mathematics and the bottom 25% of schools for science. The lower performance of boys has contributed to these falling trends. The percentage of pupils attaining above the expected level at the end of key stage 1 (level 3) in mathematics and science is generally about average for the family and above in English. The comparative performance of boys and girls within the school at this level is variable.

At key stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, for pupils of eleven years of age, has been higher than the family, local authority and all-Wales averages since 2006. Over the last three years, performance in English has varied from between the top 25% and the upper 50% of that for schools in similar circumstances. All pupils attained at least the expected level in science (level 4) in each of the last four years, which places the school amongst the top performing schools. Pupils' mathematic results are more variable with results for 2009 and 2010 placing it in the lower 50% of similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining above the expected level (level 5)

is generally above family, local and all-Wales averages in English, mathematics and science. Girls generally outperform boys at this level.

Unpublished end of key stage data for 2010-2011 shows overall improvement in pupils' attainment in many key performance indicators from 2009-2010.

Pupils with additional learning needs and pupils in receipt of free school meals generally make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They listen intently and concentrate effectively on their tasks and discuss their activities with enthusiasm and understanding. Most pupils co-operate well as pairs or groups and make confident contributions in classroom discussions. They respect each other's points of view and can justify decisions and opinions. Pupils' behaviour is generally good and most show care and concern for others. Older pupils readily take responsibility for mediating any playground disagreements and in supporting younger pupils in improving their Welsh skills.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle and how to achieve it. The school fruit tuck shop enables pupils to make healthy choices and pupils grow their own vegetables. Pupils feel safe in school and are keen to engage in the varied after school activities, such as mixed netball and football, hockey and dance.

The school council and eco committee allow pupils to assume positions of responsibility and encourage pupils' decision-making skills. The school council recently participated in the recruitment of the new headteacher, where pupils' views were sought and valued. Pupils' involvement in what and how they learn is developing appropriately. For instance, groups of pupils in Year 6 decide on what to include as part of their transition project with the high school.

Attendance at around 94% is in line with that of similar schools but has shown a gradual decline over the last three years.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The school generally provides a good range of learning experiences that successfully engage many learners. Teachers' day-to-day planning is detailed and generally provides clear learning objectives, particularly for English language, mathematics and science.

Planning provides good opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. However, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to apply these skills across all areas of the curriculum. Thematic planning does not always pay enough attention to ensuring that pupils' skills in areas of learning and subjects are taught systematically, or provide a full range of curricular

experiences. This means that there is a lack of continuity and progression in pupils' learning in certain areas.

Planning for Welsh is not coherent enough to sufficiently develop pupils' language skills sequentially and in depth. The provision that the school makes to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Welsh culture and heritage is adequate.

While planning for pupils withdrawn from classes for additional support is appropriate, the organisation of sessions means that pupils often miss important aspects of classroom work.

The school succeeds in promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship through activities such as recycling, forest school, achieving the eco-schools green flag status and its fairtrade initiative.

A good range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of interest, in the local area and further afield, such as forest school, enhance pupils' learning experiences.

Teaching: Good

In general, the quality of teaching is good. Many teachers use a good range of effective teaching approaches and techniques and have high expectations of their pupils.

In the majority of classes where teaching is most effective, teachers share clear lesson objectives and success criteria with their pupils, sessions proceed at an appropriate pace, and resources are used to good effect. Where teaching is less effective, activities are not well matched to pupils' abilities and tasks are not fully explained.

All staff have very positive relationships with pupils and there is a consistent approach to behaviour management.

Where learning support assistants are used well, they make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and wellbeing. Occasionally, adult support over-directs learning and restricts pupils' independent learning skills.

Teachers regularly provide oral and written feedback to pupils. Written feedback, however, is often superficial and does not help pupils to know how to improve their learning and reach their targets. Assessment for learning is developing appropriately in many classes. Older pupils, for instance, set their own success criteria for certain tasks.

Parents are well informed about their children's progress and achievements through regular parents' meetings and reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a happy and caring environment where pupils develop good attitudes to health and wellbeing.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the school's personal and social educational provision. As a result, most pupils have a good understanding of how to manage their feelings and how to treat others fairly and with respect.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Joint working between the school and parish is a strength. In the best practice, religious education lessons are innovative and engaging and provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs.

The school effectively promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles through curriculum areas, such as science and physical education, and through themed weeks and out of school learning.

The school uses the expertise of specialist services very well. It works closely with health and social services specialists in order to provide timely and appropriate support for pupils and their families. The recent introduction of the Primary Schools Counselling Project has further enhanced the school's capacity to provide for vulnerable pupils. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

The school generally identifies and plans to meet pupils' additional learning needs well. Pupils' individual education plans are generally appropriate, although strategies for pupils to improve their behaviour are not always specific enough.

A health and safety issue was brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.

Learning environment: Good

The school has established a very strong caring ethos, where every child is valued as an individual. There is a clear emphasis on ensuring that any instances of less than good behaviour or bullying are dealt with promptly and sensitively. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities.

The accommodation is well maintained and sufficient to meet the needs of pupils, with good use made of spare rooms for support activities. The playgrounds are small, but lack of space for developing pupils' physical skills is compensated for by regular use of the local authority's sports village and the use of forest school. The infants' playground provides a rich learning environment, but the junior playground is lacking in suitable resources.

With the exception of those for Welsh, resources are generally plentiful and of good quality.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Adequate
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Leadership: Adequate

The acting headteacher has led the school very well through a period of instability. She has given the school a clearer strategic focus and has ensured that key documentation is in place.

The acting headteacher has begun to distribute leadership more effectively to ensure greater accountability. Over the last year, staff meetings have been more efficiently run and more clearly focused on school improvement. The senior leadership team have clear roles and responsibilities and are enthusiastically committed to the school. However, while senior leaders have a good understanding of overall priorities, they do not always carry out their roles effectively enough to ensure greater consistency in learning and teaching and curriculum provision.

The school has appropriate procedures for performance management. All staff in the school are part of this process and this contributes well to a shared ethos of mutual responsibility. However, the management of teachers' performance has not always been robust enough to improve their practice.

The governing body has recently been reconstituted and the chair of governors and several members of the governing body are new to their roles. They are committed to improving the school and have a good understanding of the recent school performance. Governors are actively involved in school life; for instance, they visit classes and look at pupils' work. Their role as critical friend in shaping the strategic direction of the school is developing satisfactorily.

The school has responded particularly well to local priorities. It has focused appropriately on key national priorities such as literacy and numeracy and the Foundation Phase. The school has not yet fully embraced the School Effectiveness Framework as a driver for school improvement.

Improving quality: Adequate

The acting headteacher has guided the school well towards a more realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses.

Formal self-evaluation has not been a regular part of school life until the last year. Although the school uses a range of information to inform the self-evaluation process, such as data analysis and parental and pupil questionnaires, self-evaluation does not as yet involve the full participation of all stakeholders. Robust and self-critical self-evaluation is at an early stage of development as staff develop their skills in asking searching questions about how good are standards and the quality of provision. As a result, the school's self-evaluation report is not an accurate enough picture of the school.

Leaders use data well to track individual pupils' and class progress and to provide useful information for teachers. The school has begun to analyse data appropriately to identify trends in performance over time. At present, data is not always used strategically enough to identify areas for improvement in learning, teaching or provision.

Leaders draw upon first-hand evidence of teaching and learning. Strengths and areas for development are analysed appropriately by senior leaders and are shared with staff in regular meetings. This process allows teachers to reflect on whole school practices and to appraise the new approaches to learning and teaching adopted by the school. This has, for instance, developed teachers' confidence in

teaching thinking skills and developing pupil-centred learning. Generally, however, the targets that are set for individual teachers as a result of lesson observation and book scrutiny are not always sufficiently specific and measurable. This means that important areas such as curriculum planning have not been fully addressed.

The school improvement plan is a very detailed and comprehensive document and although it identifies many priorities the plan does not communicate key strategic priorities clearly enough.

Teachers develop their professional knowledge well through staff meetings and in meetings with local schools. However, there are too few opportunities within the school for staff to explore ideas about learning and teaching.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well with a range of partners to improve outcomes in pupils' achievement and wellbeing.

The school has an effective partnership with another local primary school. Teachers and teaching assistants have shared skills and swapped roles and pupils have visited the school to develop their skills in peer mediation.

There are effective arrangements with the school's partner secondary school to ease the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3. Year 6 pupils benefit from visiting the high school to take part in science lessons and to participate in sporting tournaments. The Foundation Phase leader liaises closely with the neighbouring nursery to identify pupils' needs on entry to the school.

There are productive and mutually beneficial links with the local community and the parish. The school forms close links to its families to support pupils' wellbeing.

Links with parents are strong. The school has a thriving parent teacher association that has supported the school very well through fund-raising activities.

Resource management: Good

The school budget is managed efficiently. Overall, the school manages its resources appropriately to support pupils' learning and wellbeing.

The school is suitably staffed to teach the curriculum and all staff are appropriately qualified. However, teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively enough to support pupils' learning fully.

The school provides good value for money because outcomes for pupils are generally good and there are no unsatisfactory standards or inadequate aspects to provision.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Almost all pupils feel that they are doing well at school and that the teachers and other adults help them to make progress. Almost all know what to do and whom to ask if work is difficult. They feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and most feel that the school provides them with lots of opportunities to get regular exercise. Almost all pupils believe that there are enough equipment, books and computers in school. A few pupils believe that their homework does not help them to understand and improve their school work. Many pupils believe that bullying is dealt with appropriately, that other children behave well so that they can do their work, and that children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Responses to parents' questionnaires

All parents are generally satisfied with the school, and believe that their children are helped to settle in well when they start at the school. All parents indicate that their children are safe at school. They believe that the school promotes good values and attitudes and that pupils at the school behave well. All parents feel that their children like school and almost all believe that staff expect their children to work hard. All parents feel that teaching is good and many feel that their children are making appropriate progress. A few parents believe that the homework given to their children does not build on the learning in classrooms and that the school does not offer a range of activities including trips and visits. Almost all parents feel that their children are well prepared for moving forward to secondary education.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Bev Jenkins	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Patricia Slater	Peer Inspector
Mrs Beever (Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11