



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 Roman Catholic Primary School
Ashvale
Tredegar
Blaenau Gwent
NP22 4AQ**

Date of inspection: September 2012

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

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is in the Ashvale area of Tredegar in Blaenau Gwent. It serves the parishes of Tredegar and Rhymney. It provides education for pupils between three and 11 years of age. There are currently 88 pupils, including 11 who attend the nursery. Pupils enter the nursery in the term in which they attain three years of age.

About 27% of pupils have additional learning needs, which is above average for primary schools in Wales. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Ninety per cent of pupils have English as the language of the home. No pupil speaks Welsh as a first language.

Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Thirty-four percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This has decreased in recent years, but it is well above the local and all-Wales averages of around 20%.

Since the last inspection a new headteacher was appointed in September 2010. Currently one member of the permanent staff is on maternity leave. Her place in the inspection was taken by a temporary teacher.

The individual school budget per pupil for St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £5,429 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Blaenau Gwent is £5,429 and the minimum £3,194. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is first out of the 27 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- pupils achieve good standards in the teacher assessments at seven and 11 years of age;
- the school provides well for pupils' wellbeing;
- the quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good;
- nearly all pupils make good progress; and
- the quality of teaching is good.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement at the school are good because:

- the headteacher has high expectations and has begun to raise standards purposefully;
- the headteacher has a clear vision for the further development of the school;
- the school has a culture of self-evaluation which provides an accurate and shared view of the school's strengths and areas for development;
- arrangements for assessment are detailed and implemented well by staff to raise standards further; and
- recent initiatives to improve provision and outcomes in information and communication technology are beginning to have a positive impact on standards.

Recommendations

R1 increase the use of Welsh across the curriculum;

R2 make effective use of the facilities and resources recently provided for information and communication technology to extend pupils' skills across the curriculum;

R3 strengthen the roles of subject co-ordinators and the structure of the senior management team; and

R4 strengthen the role of the governing body in long-term strategic planning.

What happens next?

St Joseph's RC Primary School will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most pupils communicate in English confidently. They talk clearly and sensibly about their work in a variety of situations. In key stage 2, many pupils contribute purposefully in group and class discussions.

The reading skills of many pupils develop well throughout the school. Pupils in reception are identifying initial sounds and a few are able to read short sentences. By the end of the Foundation Phase, the many read texts appropriate to their age and ability. The more able and talented pupils read accurately and intelligently in English. They discuss the contents of books effectively, express an opinion on them and talk about their favourite authors.

Pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils spell a range of simple words accurately and are using their phonic knowledge to make good attempts at new words. By Year 6, many structure their work appropriately and write for a suitable range of purposes. Generally most pupils take a pride in their work and present it carefully.

Across the school, pupils develop their numeracy skills well. However, pupils do not use these skills frequently enough across the curriculum. The information and communication technology skills of most pupils are limited because they have had little access to necessary equipment.

Many pupils make steady progress in developing subject-specific skills over time. Their thinking and independent learning skills are less well developed.

In Welsh in the Foundation Phase, nearly all pupils use a limited range of phrases appropriately and respond confidently to questioning. Most pupils in key stage 2 are enthusiastic and have a positive attitude towards the language during daily focused sessions. Their use of Welsh informally outside specific lessons in Welsh is at an early stage of development. Pupils' progress in Welsh across key stage 2 is adequate.

Pupils' performance in achieving the expected level (outcome 5 or higher) at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 compares well with that of other schools in the family and of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Outcomes in English, mathematics and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity are above local and national averages.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance at the expected level (level 4) in English, mathematics and science has improved considerably since 2010 when it was below the average for similar schools and local and national averages. In 2012, results in English were well above local and national averages and the school was first in its family of schools. In mathematics, the school was second in its family and results

were above local and national averages. In science, results placed the school third in its family and in line with local and national averages. The combined results placed the school first in its family.

Results at the higher level (level 5) have also improved sharply and compare well with the results of other schools in the family.

The difference in the performance of boys and girls and that between those entitled to free school meals and others is variable. This reflects the relatively small group who are assessed and does not follow national or family trends.

Wellbeing: Good

Behaviour is good throughout the school. Nearly all pupils show respect for one another and are courteous and polite to staff and visitors.

Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Many pupils work effectively in lessons and respond with enthusiasm to tasks set. Most pupils enjoy school and co-operate and interact effectively with each other.

Overall, pupils feel safe within the school and they are confident that staff deal promptly and effectively with any bullying. They also show a good understanding of the importance of nutrition and exercise in developing a healthy lifestyle.

Attendance rates have improved steadily in recent years and were at 95% for the last year. This is above similar schools and local averages.

Pupils take part successfully in informal discussions about their topics and class work. The school council represents the views of all pupils well. They have a developing understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are becoming familiar with the democratic process. For example, members have attended the Grand Council for Blaenau Gwent and chaired its meeting.

Many pupils take on responsibilities eagerly and show concern for each other. They support local and other charities generously and take an active part in community activities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides an adequate range of opportunities and learning experiences for pupils. Staff enhance learning experiences well with a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs, which many pupils enjoy. Groups of learners are identified and appropriate support is provided within the class and during withdrawal sessions for them.

Teachers are beginning to identify appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' communication, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in short-term and medium-term planning. There is a recently constructed overview of skills development that ensures that pupils build systematically on what they already know and can do across all subject areas.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills in lessons is appropriate. The use of Welsh by the majority of staff and the use of bilingual signs and notices are beginning to have a positive impact on the promotion of the language. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use Welsh consistently and independently within and outside the classroom. The school gives many rich opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales.

The school acts sustainably in the way it seeks to reduce, reuse and recycle resources and is well supported in this by its eco-committee. It is also developing education for sustainable development successfully through the curriculum. However, many pupils do not understand the consequences of acting in sustainable ways and the impact of failing to do so.

Teaching: Good

Teachers in the Foundation Phase have a good understanding of how to plan and teach effectively to meet the needs of the pupils. Across the school, teachers plan systematically and carefully to match the work to the different abilities in their classes. They use the additional support of the learning assistants well to ensure that all pupils are busily engaged in their learning.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are invariably constructive. Teachers set out clearly what they expect of their pupils in the time available and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They review carefully what pupils have learned during the sessions. They recognise success warmly and create a reassuring atmosphere where they encourage pupils to evaluate their own learning and that of others in a mature way.

Teachers regularly remind their pupils of what they should achieve in the time available. Pupils are encouraged to be positive but realistic critics of their own work and that of other pupils.

In a few lessons, teaching does not always extend the most able and challenge them to achieve more.

Assessment for learning strategies are well developed and effective. Teachers use pupil self-assessment and peer-assessment throughout the school to inform pupils about their progress. Teachers' written feedback to pupils is generally good. Teachers' comments are positive and supportive. The majority of lesson evaluations inform future planning effectively. A good feature of the school is the use by pupil of target cards to support their learning.

There are clear and thorough systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress. Teachers use standardised tests and their own assessments effectively to set challenging and realistic targets. Individual and group targets are effectively monitored regularly during the school year. Assessment and monitoring of pupils achievement and attainment is a strength of the school.

Reports to parents are detailed and helpful. Reports identify clear targets for improvement and include opportunities for parents to comment. Most parents say that they are very well informed about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a positive ethos. Pupils are provided with a range of good opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The school's personal and social education programme contributes very positively to the health and wellbeing of pupils.

There is effective involvement with outside agencies, for example with speech and language therapists, educational welfare officers and educational psychologists. These have a valuable impact on pupils' achievements and wellbeing across the school. Parents have the opportunity, through the school, to be part of the Tredegar Hub, a locally funded initiative, which effectively supports parents and children.

Procedures for identifying pupils who need additional support with their work are good. Pupils and parents are fully involved in setting improvement targets. The progress pupils make is reviewed regularly. Teachers and support staff use assessment information effectively to ensure that the needs of pupils with additional learning needs are met and further support is provided, if required. This is having a positive effect on the standards these pupils achieve. The school has correctly identified the need for further development of the support for the more able and talented on their school improvement plan. A good literacy catch up is run by the school.

There are also effective arrangements in place for addressing harassment and encouraging attendance. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive Christian community where pupils learn in a secure, happy and caring environment. There is a strong emphasis on equality and the school recognises and celebrates diversity positively, through the curriculum and out-of-school activities.

The availability of teaching and learning resources of good quality fully meets the needs of pupils and staff. Teachers use these resources effectively to deliver all aspects of the curriculum.

The school buildings and grounds are well maintained and meet the needs of pupils successfully. They include well-appointed rooms for withdrawal and for support activities. The school is a stimulating environment, which contains many displays of high quality which celebrate pupils' success. There are also well-resourced outdoor play areas and a garden area which is being extended to enhance pupils' learning further.

The recent purchase of laptops and other information and communication technology equipment has improved the school's provision and pupils are beginning to use these more effectively across the curriculum.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Good

Leadership: Adequate

The headteacher has worked closely with staff to identify priorities for the school and to begin to address them systematically and effectively. She sets high expectations for herself and for the quality of teaching and learning which the school provides.

The changes have included a strong focus on raising pupils' standards and addressing under performance. These initiatives are having a positive impact in classes and are increasingly reflected in the progress pupils are making.

The roles of co-ordinators have been reviewed and as a result they now have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They have begun the process of monitoring standards and are beginning to lead their subjects purposefully.

Currently the school is developing a management structure in which the senior management team is more involved in decision-making and in taking responsibilities in leading initiatives.

There are appropriate systems in place for the performance management of staff which focuses appropriately on their professional development needs and the school's priorities.

The governing body is well informed about the standards the school achieves. Governors have recently received training in the roles and responsibilities. They are in the process of developing their strategic overview of the future needs of the school and in planning the way ahead.

The school addresses local and national priorities appropriately. The Foundation Phase is well established. The recent focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy and in using detailed analysis of pupils' progress has begun to be effective.

Improving quality: Good

The self-evaluation report presents an honest, clear picture of the school's performance, its strengths and areas for development. It makes firm and accurate judgements about the standards of pupils' work. The school has a comprehensive range of self-evaluation procedures, which include the views of staff, parents and pupils. There are also detailed arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching. The self-evaluation report is of good quality. It is evaluative and focuses well on the outcomes for pupils. It outlines the school's successes and highlights appropriate areas for improvement.

The school development plan is very detailed and sets out clearly the school's priorities based on the results of the self-evaluation process. It breaks down development planning into realistic small steps, sets out suitable timescales and costs, and establishes appropriate success criteria.

There are three professional learning communities in the school to enable staff to share professional knowledge and meet the priorities of the school improvement plan. These groups focus on literacy, numeracy and science. The full impact of these groups has yet to be seen in relation to their impact on further improvements in the standard of pupils' work. There are good examples of effective teaching shared within the school, and members of staff are given many opportunities to acquire new skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a good partnership with parents and they are positive about all aspects of school life. They feel welcome in the school and they receive good information about day-to-day events through regular newsletters and text messages. There are effective arrangements for pupils new to the school to settle quickly.

The school collaborates well with its neighbouring secondary schools and the group of local primary schools to pool resources effectively. There are good transition arrangements in place which ensure that pupils are well prepared for their move to the secondary school of their choice.

There are regular joint meetings with other local primary schools to standardise and moderate pupils' work at the end of key stage 2. The good links with the community have also enhanced the extra-curricular provision within the school. All of these partnerships have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Resource management: Good

There are enough qualified staff to teach the full range of subjects and areas of learning. All teachers receive appropriate time for planning, preparation and assessment which is well used to raise standards. Classroom assistants are deployed efficiently and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and wellbeing. The headteacher and the finance committee of the governing body keep school expenditure under regular review. The school's spending decisions relate well to the priorities set out in the school improvement plan and to pupils' learning needs. Recent spending has improved the internal and external environment and the provision for information and communication technology.

Taking into account the good standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education provided, the school gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Care should be taken when considering the data because of the relatively small groups of pupils who are assessed. Data for seven-year-olds in the national teacher assessments is limited to 2012 only.

In 2012, starting from a low base, the performance of seven-year-olds in the end of the Foundation Phase assessments was positive. Outcomes at level 5 or higher were well above the average for other schools in the family and for schools in the same free school meals group. Results in English, mathematics and personal, social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity were above local and national averages.

In key stage 2 over the past three years, pupils' performance at the expected level (level 4) has improved significantly in English, mathematics and science and when the three subjects are combined. In 2010, the combined results were below family, local and national averages. In 2011, these results improved so that they were just above local and national averages but below the family average. In 2012, the combined results were above all of these comparators. The school was first in the family, where it would be reasonable to expect it to be in seventh position.

In the individual subjects, results at the expected level have followed a similar pattern. In English, mathematics and science, results in 2010 were below family, local and national averages and have risen. In all subjects at this level, results were above these averages. The school was first in its family in English, second in mathematics and third in science.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance at the higher level, level 5 in English fell in 2011 to below family, local and national averages and increased in 2012 to above all of these comparators. The school was first in its family in English at this level. In mathematics in 2010 and 2011, results were below family, local and national averages, but in 2012 they rose to well above. The school was first in its family. Overall, the evidence of pupils' work confirms the results in the national teacher assessments.

Over the past three years, the school's performance has improved when compared to that of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In 2010, in the combined results and in mathematics, the school was in the lowest 25% of those schools. Currently, the school is in the highest 25%. In English and science, results in 2010 were above those of 50% of those schools. They are now in the highest 25%.

In key stage 2, there is no clear pattern in performance of those entitled to free schools and those who do not receive them. Similarly, while girls outperform boys in some areas, boys also outperform girls in others. This is related to the small number of boys in recent cohorts and their relative abilities.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Pupil questionnaire

Forty-five pupils completed the learner questionnaires. Their responses were mainly in line or above those of other pupils in other schools in Wales.

Pupils were more positive about the behaviour of other children at playtime and lunchtime and about behaviour in the school in general.

All pupils who responded thought that:

- the school dealt with bullying well;
- they knew whom to talk to if they were worried or upset;
- the school taught them to keep healthy;
- there were lots of chances for regular exercise;
- they were helped to learn and make progress; and
- they knew whom to ask and what to do if they found the work hard.

Nearly all who responded:

- felt safe in school;
- were doing well at school;
- agreed that homework was helping them to improve their work in school;
- thought that they had enough books, equipment and computers;
- felt that other children behaved well and allowed them to get on with their own work; and
- agreed that all children behaved well at playtime and lunchtime.

Parent questionnaire

There were 20 responses to the parent questionnaire. Their responses were in line with or more positive than those of other parents in Wales.

All of those who responded agreed that:

- their children liked school and were helped to settle in well when they started;
- staff expected their children to work hard and to do their best;
- their children were well treated and shown respect;
- children were safe in school;
- they understood the procedures for dealing with complaints; and
- there was a good range of activities including trips and visits.

Nearly all of those who responded:

- were satisfied with the school;
- felt that their children were making good progress;
- were satisfied that behaviour was good;
- were happy with the quality of teaching;
- were satisfied with the homework set;
- felt that their children were well supported;
- were comfortable about approaching the school;
- were happy with the help given to their children to become mature and to take on responsibility; and
- were satisfied in how the school was run.

A few parents had negative views about:

- the information they received about their children's progress; and
- the preparation for moving on to the next school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Elerio Hurley	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Andrew Rothwell	Peer Inspector
Jill Jones	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.