



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.High School
Pencarn Way
Tredegar Park
NP10 8XH**

Date of inspection: March 2018

by

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

About St Joseph's R.C.High School

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic High School in Newport, is a voluntary-aided, mixed, 11-18 school, in the city of Newport and within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff. There are 1,388 pupils on roll, a decrease of 92 since the last inspection in January 2013. There are 231 students in the sixth form.

Most pupils come from within the city of Newport, and a small minority come from Risca, Caldicot and Chepstow.

Just over 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average of 17% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 36% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

Around 18% of pupils have a special educational need, which is below the average of 21.5% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 2.0% of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is similar to the average figure for Wales as a whole.

Twenty-two per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and close to 20% speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher has been in post for five years. There is also one deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and three temporary assistant headteachers.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to professional learning.

Estyn does not inspect religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

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

Summary

Ensuring that all pupils are both nurtured with care and enabled to achieve their potential is pivotal to the work of St Joseph's R.C. High School. As a result, many pupils make strong progress, particularly in external examinations at the end of key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school is especially successful in promoting its principles of 'faith in action'. Kindness and consideration for others are demonstrated consistently by both pupils and staff.

The school is highly successful in providing outstanding care, support and guidance within a Catholic community. Strong, principled leadership has ensured high levels of wellbeing and positive outcomes for pupils, as well as good quality teaching and valuable opportunities for staff to develop professionally.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

R2 Improve standards in Welsh, particularly at key stage 4

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 supporting vulnerable pupils, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils make consistently strong progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Over the past three years, the school's performance in most indicators at key stage 4 compares favourably with that of similar schools.

In many lessons, many pupils make strong progress and a few achieve particularly high standards. Many recall prior learning accurately and apply their skills and knowledge efficiently to new contexts, such as when they apply the principles of other games sports to their learning of touch rugby.

Most pupils listen respectfully to teachers and their peers. They express their opinions clearly and explain their viewpoints cogently, for example when discussing their views on matters such as the social causes of crime or how business performance is measured. Many support and extend their points of argument well and use subject specific vocabulary confidently and accurately. For example, in geography, pupils use appropriate terminology to discuss why some species are in danger of extinction. A few pupils are very articulate and express themselves particularly fluently. However, a few pupils offer short, underdeveloped verbal responses.

Many pupils display a sound understanding of a variety of reading texts, but respond particularly well to literary texts. Many understand implied meaning well and more able pupils have especially advanced inference and deduction skills. For example, they are sensitive and perceptive in their analysis of war poetry and Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice'. Many analyse the impact of word choices well and a majority analyse the effect of writing techniques effectively. Many pupils skim and scan confidently to locate and extract information from various reading texts. Many are able to evaluate a range of reading sources successfully and comment sensibly on their value and reliability, such as when they consider the publication dates and authenticity of sources in 'Mini Baccalaureate' lessons or in history when comparing differing views on child labour.

Many pupils develop a wide range of writing skills and produce well-structured extended writing in a variety of subjects. For example, they write analytically about the circumstances of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in countries around the world. Many have a sound vocabulary and write suitably for a range of purposes and audiences. These pupils apply writing techniques effectively in their own writing, such as when they employ the features of gothic writing to write stories or use persuasive techniques in speeches. The spelling, punctuation and grammar of many pupils is generally accurate, but a minority of pupils frequently misspell common words.

Pupils' numeracy skills are particularly strong. Many use a wide range of numerical skills effectively and complete their work accurately. This includes responding to tasks such as completing income tax calculations and tackling complex co-ordinates in geometry. In geography, they apply their understanding of mode, median and range confidently when studying measurements of earthquake eruptions. Many have sound data handling and measuring skills and their graph work is secure.

In information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, many pupils develop their skills well. This includes using spreadsheets and formulae to create a booking system and to forecast profits for a ticket selling company. They also use their knowledge of computer coding competently to create a programme to control the sequence of traffic lights. However, they do not use these higher order skills consistently effectively across the curriculum.

Pupils develop their creative skills well. They produce highly creative artwork using a variety of media such as bleach painting, foil embroidery and glass fusion. In drama, pupils' empathy, their understanding of racial tolerance and their creative skills combine successfully to create and act a courtroom scene based on the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

Many pupils apply their thinking skills well in a variety of contexts. For example, sixth form geography students apply their prior knowledge and thinking skills deftly in order to understand complex concepts regarding the impact of human behaviour on the coastline. In English, more able key stage 4 pupils link unfamiliar and disconnected images successfully to their studied text, 'Heroes'.

Performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has been strong over the past three years and compares well with that in similar schools, as does performance in the capped points score.

Over the past three years, the performance of both boys and girls compares favourably with that of boys and girls in similar schools.

The performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has been above the average for the same group of pupils in similar schools in nearly all indicators for the past three years. Pupils with additional learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language make strong progress.

The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades at A*-A has improved steadily over the past three years and has been consistently higher than in similar schools.

Pupils in the sixth form are particularly well motivated and engaged in their learning. Performance in the sixth form has generally compared well with that in similar schools over recent years. In 2017, performance in the indicator that includes three or more A level grades or equivalent at A*-A is especially strong but does not compare well with that in similar schools in previous years.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in education, employment or training.

At key stage 4, a majority of pupils achieve a level 2 GCSE qualification in Welsh.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

The very high levels of attendance of all groups of pupils, sustained over time, are a notable strength of the school.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure. Many pupils arrive punctually at the start of lessons, ready to learn. They display positive behaviour during and between lessons, treating each other and adults with respect and courtesy. However, in a few lessons, a few pupils' behaviour disrupts the learning of others.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They support each other well and work productively in pairs and groups, such as when they work collaboratively to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different types of theatre stages in drama. Many pupils sustain their interest and engagement in activities to develop their skills and understanding successfully. In music, for instance, they maintain focus and persevere in order to improve the accuracy and quality of their ensemble performance by varying elements such as timbre and tempo. However, a minority of pupils are too passive and do not engage meaningfully in their work.

Most pupils understand how to make healthy choices and take regular exercise, including from a wide range of extra-curricular fitness opportunities. Many pupils develop as well-informed and compassionate citizens who show care and kindness towards others. They raise funds and awareness for numerous charitable projects, as individuals, year groups and as a school community. Over the last three years, pupils have raised over £25,000 for many worthwhile causes, such as a school in Cambodia and a local special school.

A particularly notable feature is the successful leadership skills demonstrated by pupils across a wide range of roles. A few pupils demonstrate exceptional leadership. Members of the eco group lead the school's extensive environmental initiatives successfully. They lead the school's recycling project, have cleaned the local stream and created an eco-garden. In Autumn 2017, the school council organised a successful conference for pupils on wellbeing and mental health, attended by more than 60 youth organisations. Sixth form pupils lead purposefully on initiatives to enhance pupil wellbeing within and beyond the school, such as the recent introduction of the 'Students Helping Out Students' peer support system. In the younger years, 'Mini-Bac ambassadors' provide evaluative feedback and suggest improvements to this new aspect of the school's curriculum.

Many pupils participate regularly in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The high rates of participation in sporting activities including weight training, dodgeball and cheerleading, are a particular strength. Older pupils also play a significant role in leading extra-curricular activities, for example science and drama clubs, as well as a range of sports clubs.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Most teachers foster beneficial working relationships with pupils and create a supportive learning environment. They have strong subject knowledge, which they use well to engage pupils. These teachers are effective language models, which has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' verbal and written responses.

In a very few especially effective lessons, teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils and encourage them to take risks and to experiment. They use their detailed knowledge of the differing abilities of the pupils they teach to plan lessons that support and challenge all pupils successfully.

Many teachers plan lessons effectively and provide a range of engaging and purposeful activities that build well on pupils' previous learning and knowledge. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour and have established helpful classroom routines. They work well with

teaching assistants to provide valuable support to pupils' learning. These teachers provide suitable levels of challenge and give plenty of opportunities for pupils to work independently and learn for themselves. In these lessons, pupils make strong progress.

In a minority of lessons, teachers over-direct pupils' learning and do not enable them to develop their independent learning skills well enough. As a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress. A very few teachers do not manage instances of misbehaviour effectively enough.

Many teachers set clear success criteria in lessons. This helps pupils to understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. These teachers use questioning techniques successfully to probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. A majority of teachers use the information gained from questioning and other assessment activities effectively to adapt their lessons and plan future learning. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' questioning does not test pupils' understanding well enough or enable teachers to assess pupils' progress precisely.

In many lessons, teachers provide pupils with useful verbal feedback and monitor their progress well. In many cases, their written feedback provides pupils with helpful advice on how they can improve their work. In a majority of subjects, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to respond meaningfully to teachers' comments and improve their work suitably.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good.

The curriculum and wider learning experiences are planned carefully to meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils. This contributes significantly to the positive outcomes achieved by pupils and the inclusive ethos of the school. A notable feature is the way leaders place a high priority on the views of pupils when planning the curriculum. Effective links with partner primary schools ensure that key stage 3 learning builds successfully on pupils' previous experiences. Key stage 4 pupils are able to choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses. Highly effective partnerships with other schools offer sixth form learners an extensive range of both vocational and academic choices. The school adapts its provision to meet the specific needs of different groups of pupils extremely well and this has a strong impact on the achievement of these pupils. For example, well planned school-based provision for a very few disaffected pupils has ensured that all pupils leave school with accredited qualifications. Valuable provision for more able pupils has also secured consistently strong outcomes over time.

The school provides a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities that enrich suitably the learning experiences of pupils. These include trips in the United Kingdom and abroad, well-attended revision clubs and other opportunities such as chaplaincy meetings, the gardening club, the folk group, the choir and school musical, and a range of sports clubs. A notable feature is the beneficial range of learning experiences that support successfully ethical and environmental awareness amongst pupils. Pupils learn about energy conservation in science and create sustainable or eco-friendly products in Welsh Baccalaureate. There is a fairtrade club and a whole-school scheme to recycle plastic bottles and raise money for charity by creating a 'bottle wall' on the school fence.

The school's provision for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is strong. Most departments plan a range of beneficial activities to develop pupils' literacy skills. The school provides valuable initiatives to encourage reading for pleasure, such as the sixth form Man Booker Prize book club, the Harry Potter Day and a buddy scheme where Year 7 pupils read with Year 2 pupils from a partner primary school. The school's work to develop the numeracy skills of pupils is also well developed. The 'numeracy toolkit' provides helpful guidance to teachers on whole-school approaches to numeracy and identified departments develop the numeracy skills of pupils successfully. As a result, pupils' numeracy skills are strong. The school closely monitors pupils' progress in their skills and has effective, comprehensive provision to help all pupils who require further literacy and numeracy support. The school is making sound progress towards implementing the digital competency framework.

The school provides an appropriate range of valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Welsh language, history and culture. Activities include the pupil-led Cyngor Cymraeg and the 'half term helpers' who encourage staff to promote use of the language.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school strives purposefully to follow the principles of 'faith in action'. High quality care, support and guidance are at the heart of its work.

The school monitors pupil progress and attendance robustly. Leaders use evidence from a wide range of sources to identify and address individual needs highly successfully. These sources include achievement and attendance data, as well as information on progress in lessons, behaviour and social development, which, combined, enable the school to gain a holistic view of each pupil.

The school supports vulnerable pupils particularly well. A highly creative range of successful initiatives is tailored carefully to meet pupils' needs. They include therapy to improve social contact, anger management support and sessions to help develop social and emotional communication skills. Their impact is monitored effectively and reviewed appropriately. Outstanding support from within the school and from a wide range of external agencies contributes to successful outcomes at the end of key stage 4, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Pupils eligible for free school meals, those with English as an additional language, and those in the care of the local authority make strong progress.

The learning support centre is highly effective in supporting pupils in danger of exclusion and dis-engagement and has been instrumental in preventing exclusions. There are robust systems for dealing effectively with the very few instances of bullying or harassment. The learning support centre and inclusion area provide beneficial havens at all times for vulnerable pupils experiencing academic or emotional difficulties.

Support and guidance for pupils with additional learning needs is a strong feature. Arrangements for identifying these pupils are sound. Comprehensive information on the needs of all these pupils is shared suitably with staff and, as a result, they are supported well in their learning and social development. Learning support staff provide valuable support for pupils.

The school employs a range of useful strategies to communicate effectively with parents. This includes social media platforms, gathering parents' opinions on parents' evenings and holding specific, focused evenings such as one on dealing with autism. Reports to parents on pupils' progress are very informative.

Pupils have extensive, worthwhile opportunities to take on leadership roles and make decisions about the life of the school. For instance, pupils with additional learning needs have helped organise a coffee morning and pupils give their opinions to school leaders on teaching and assessment.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to adopt a healthy life style and learn about the benefits of healthy eating and drinking. The comprehensive personal and social education programme contributes effectively to developing pupils' social skills and preparing them for the world of work and adult life. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities encourages positive pupil involvement in creative arts and sports activities and widens their cultural experiences successfully.

The school provides very effective guidance and support on spiritual and moral issues. It strongly encourages forgiveness and reconciliation and helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of all people.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The principles and teaching of the Catholic faith are at the heart of the headteacher's vision. His thoughtful and assured leadership is characterised by careful consideration of the needs and aspirations of all members of the school community. The headteacher and his senior leadership team promote a shared sense of purpose and heartfelt commitment to the school's values and ambitions. This is communicated clearly and embraced fully by all.

Strong leadership over time has had significant impact on key aspects of the school's work. These include consistently strong outcomes at all key stages, particularly for groups of pupils such as those who are more able, consistently high levels of attendance and exceptional provision for care, support and guidance.

Senior leaders' roles and responsibilities are balanced well and defined clearly. Temporary appointments to the senior leadership team are very effective in strengthening senior leadership and driving national priorities, such as reducing successfully the impact of deprivation. The consistently strong outcomes for pupils who are eligible for free school meals are a particularly notable feature. Most middle leaders provide effective leadership in their areas of responsibility.

Line management procedures are robust, and ensure that senior and middle leaders are held to account for their work. Performance management is linked closely to school priorities and the development needs of individual staff.

The role and challenge provided by the governing body are a particular strength. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work in close partnership with the headteacher to realise the

school's values and ambitions. They use their wide range of experiences and expertise deftly to support and challenge the school robustly. They play an active part in the school's self-evaluation process, using first hand evidence effectively to inform their role as critical friends.

The school has developed a clear, well-understood cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities. It draws suitably on a wide range of evidence, including performance data, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of pupils, parents and staff. Senior leaders and most middle leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is reflected well in the concise and evaluative whole-school self-evaluation report and the comprehensive reports produced by most middle leaders. There are clear links between the areas for development identified through self-evaluation processes and improvement priorities. Departmental priorities are aligned closely to the school's identified priorities and improvement plans are live, working documents with challenging targets and clear milestones to measure progress.

A strong feature of leaders' work over time is their accurate recognition and decisive, successful address of aspects that need improving, such as outcomes in mathematics and those of more able pupils in the sixth form. However, in a few instances, leaders are overgenerous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and do not identify precisely enough aspects of teaching that need improvement.

A notable strength of the school is the way in which leaders plan for and support the professional learning of teaching and support staff. This has been especially successful in enabling staff to develop leadership skills. Most teachers are involved in a variety of high quality opportunities, such as the 'Aspiring to Senior Leadership' programme and valuable in-service training sessions for all staff. This has strengthened the practice of many teachers and enabled many to develop as effective leaders. The school supports and collaborates well with other schools and takes a leading role in working with others at a local and national level to provide guidance and training on areas such as support for newly-qualified teachers.

The governing body, headteacher and business manager monitor the school's budget carefully and ensure spending decisions are aligned closely to development priorities. The pupil development grant and other grant funding are used purposefully to support the needs of vulnerable learners, who make excellent progress. Effective leadership has been successful in securing high levels of wellbeing and strong outcomes for pupils.

Copies of the report

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

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

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

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 10/05/2018