



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

A report on

St Josephs R.C.Primary School Neath

**Cook Rees Avenue
Neath
SA11 1UR**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About St Josephs R.C.Primary School Neath

Name of provider	St Josephs R.C.Primary School Neath
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	129
Pupils of statutory school age	95
Number in nursery classes	22
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%)	29.4%
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%)	22.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/11/2014
Start date of inspection	20/03/2023

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

St Joseph's R.C. Primary School provides a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Ensuring the well-being of pupils is a high priority for all members of the school community. As a result, pupils feel cared for and valued by staff.

The newly appointed acting headteacher has built strong relationships with pupils, parents and staff. She has established a culture of trust and kindness. However, leadership and governance do not show the capacity to identify or address areas in need of improvement. Over time, leaders have not identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching and provision for younger pupils or the need to provide greater challenge for more able pupils. The school has a substantial deficit budget and there is no plan in place to address this.

Leaders and staff are continuing to develop their school curriculum to align with the Curriculum for Wales. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate and supports most pupils to make suitable progress. A few pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 make good progress in this aspect of their learning. The school has made positive improvements in the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) recently. This has resulted in improved progress for these pupils.

Overall, the teaching and the learning experiences provided for pupils do not support them to make enough progress across the full breadth of the curriculum during their time at school. Provision for the school's youngest pupils is particularly weak. Across the school, teachers do not support pupils to use their skills well enough. The range of learning experiences is limited, and pupils have little influence over what or how they learn.

A few safeguarding issues were brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the safeguarding and health and safety issues identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve strategic leadership at all levels and implement effective evaluation and improvement processes that focus on improving outcomes for pupils
- R3 Improve teaching and assessment
- R4 Improve the curriculum and provision for pupils' skills including their independent learning skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main evaluation

Learning

Around half of the pupils start school at a stage of development in their communication and numeracy skills below that expected for their chronological age. During their time at school, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make suitable progress from their starting points in literacy and in developing their number skills. However, most pupils do not apply the skills they have across the curriculum well enough. In addition, more able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Most pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets.

Generally, pupils do not develop their problem solving and thinking skills well enough. The school does not provide an environment that enables younger pupils to engage in play that enables them to think deeply and overcome challenges. As a result, younger pupils do not persevere and work together well enough. Most older pupils persevere appropriately on tasks their teachers give them. However, they do not apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to new situations well enough.

From their starting points, most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well. Many younger pupils are confident when explaining what animals they have made from play dough. As they move through school, most pupils improve their oracy skills well. They talk confidently, listen carefully, and respond appropriately to each other and adults. For example, during their design and technology lessons they use persuasive language to encourage their teacher to buy more resources.

Around half of reception pupils develop their phonic knowledge appropriately. They learn letter sounds suitably and apply this knowledge when working out how to read simple unknown words. In Year 1 and Year 2, most pupils improve their reading skills appropriately and read simple texts fluently. They talk about a story, saying what has happened and what they think may happen next. Most older pupils continue to read with fluency and tackle more challenging vocabulary successfully, such as when they read from websites to research about waterwheels. However, many older pupils do not engage with literature that develops a love of reading well enough. As a result, many pupils do not read books that challenge them to imagine and think deeply.

In nursery, many pupils begin to develop their early writing skills appropriately through mark making. In reception, around half of pupils write short words, often with support. A majority of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 write simple phrases and sentences using appropriate punctuation and plausible spelling. Within literacy lessons, many older pupils write for a range of different purposes appropriately, such as writing profiles about the actor Michael Sheen. They develop their spelling and punctuation skills suitably. Across the school, nearly all more able pupils do not write to the standard of which they are capable. Most pupils do not use their literacy skills well enough to support their learning in other subjects.

Overall, across the school, most pupils' understanding of number is appropriate. However, pupils make limited progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in other areas of mathematics. Many younger pupils count objects to

10 accurately. Over time, they develop their number skills suitably. Around half of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 understand how numbers can be split into number bonds. By the time they reach Year 6, they tackle age-appropriate calculations using taught methods accurately. However, in all classes, pupils do not use this knowledge to solve problems in different contexts well enough. For example, most younger pupils do not use their number knowledge in their play often enough. Most older pupils' ability to apply their knowledge of number to help solve word problems is underdeveloped. Across the school, nearly all pupils do not extend their mathematical thinking and use their knowledge of number in other areas of mathematics or across the curriculum well enough.

Most pupils improve their Welsh language skills appropriately. Younger pupils respond to simple Welsh questions suitably. They enjoy speaking Welsh when prompted and sing songs in Welsh happily. Older pupils continue to develop their Welsh language skills appropriately.

Most pupils improve their digital skills well. Younger pupils use tablet computers for mark making and by the time they get to Year 2 they use a range of online games to support their literacy and numeracy development well. Older pupils use a range of software packages well. They use word processing packages successfully to collaborate and share ideas, such as when writing reports about tigers.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils feel safe and secure in school. Nearly all pupils report that the school treats everyone fairly and that staff listen to them. Many pupils are confident and interact positively with adults and peers. Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe, including when online. Most pupils understand the benefits of healthy eating and are aware of how to make healthy food choices.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to outdoor physical activity and participate enthusiastically in daily exercise during lunch and break times. Most pupils enjoy beneficial PE sessions, developing their physical skills appropriately as they progress through the school.

Most pupils are happy and have positive attitudes to school life. They behave well during lessons and when moving around the school. When appropriate, pupils make use of the school's provision to help regulate their emotional well-being. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between each other, are positive and supportive. As a result, nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and adults. Most older pupils settle quickly and well into daily routines and start tasks without delay. They have positive attitudes to their learning and collaborate well with their peers. For example, when they create a joint report about animals, pupils use a shared online document to collate their research effectively.

Many older pupils engage appropriately in their learning and complete tasks with interest. They talk about their learning with suitable understanding and explain how to improve their work when given the opportunity to do so. For example, when writing poems, pupils explain how they improve metaphors to describe a storm. Most older pupils persevere well with tasks teachers give them. However, most pupils do not think about alternative ways of doing things or use creative skills to solve problems.

Overall, pupils do not use feedback to improve their learning well enough. This is usually because the quality of the feedback given to them by teachers does not help them to understand what they need to do to improve.

When given opportunities, many pupils demonstrate creative skills appropriately. For example, younger pupils create detailed model animals as part of their work on 'We are all God's creatures'. Older pupils use their creative skills effectively when photographing the local school environment.

Pupils with leadership roles take them seriously and are beginning to make decisions that impact on improving school life for their peers. For example, the School Council recently completed a review of available play equipment on the junior yard. As a result, the school has purchased equipment, such as a balancing block game.

Overall, across the school most pupils do not develop as ambitious, capable or resilient learners due to the limited opportunities provided to them by the school.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has started to explore approaches to plan and deliver the Curriculum for Wales. However, it does not provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Apart from number skills and aspects of literacy skills, teachers do not have a clear understanding of how they expect pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across and through the curriculum.

Teachers enhance the curriculum through a range of trips and visitors to the school appropriately. For instance, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about the benefits of understanding special offers and saving money during a visit from a bank clerk. Many older pupils show enthusiasm when researching and sharing their knowledge about herbivores and carnivores. However, overall, teachers do not plan stimulating learning experiences regularly enough. There are limited examples of activities that are authentic and based in real life contexts that pupils can relate to.

Overall, the school's provision for learning outdoors is underdeveloped. The outdoor environment does not enable learning across the curriculum well enough. For example, teachers do not routinely plan opportunities for older pupils to learn outdoors.

The provision in place for the development of pupils' literacy skills within English lessons is suitable. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum are at the early stages of development.

The school has recently implemented an approach to support the teaching of mathematics. This has resulted in the curriculum becoming too narrowly focused on number, and opportunities to learn about other areas of mathematics are limited. The opportunities for pupils to apply numeracy skills across the curriculum are underdeveloped.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh is generally effective with particular strengths in Year 3 and Year 4. Opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural aspects of Wales are appropriately diverse. For example, pupils write engaging poems about a 'recipe for Wales' that reflect the heritage of pupils within their class and community.

The provision for supporting pupils' personal and social development is suitable. Nearly all members of staff have positive relationships with pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour in lessons well and treat all pupils equally and with respect. Most teachers use support staff well to support pupils' learning both individually and in groups.

In around half of classes, teachers have well-established daily routines. They have created classrooms that are suitable places for pupils to learn and use a range of different resources to support their teaching successfully. However, in the classes for younger pupils, teachers do not provide areas for independent learning that are stimulating and do not provide suitable resources to support and enhance pupils' learning through play well enough. Teachers do not show a strong understanding of how young children learn or of how to support their development.

Most teachers provide pupils with clear instructions and explanations. Around half of teachers set suitable learning objectives for tasks, which they share appropriately with their class. As a result, pupils in these lessons know what the focus of the lesson is and what they need to do. Around half of teachers use a suitable pace in their teaching. However, on other occasions, teachers use introductions that are too long and, as a result, a few pupils lose concentration and interest.

The majority of teachers do not always plan activities that meet the needs of pupils well enough as tasks are often either too easy or too difficult. Nearly all teachers do not give pupils the opportunity to develop independence well enough as too often teachers over-direct tasks. Teachers rarely provide pupils with opportunities to influence what or how they learn.

Overall, the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils varies too greatly. In the minority of instances where it is effective, teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. In the strongest practice, members of staff use appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding and to extend their learning further. In the older classes, teachers often pause lessons appropriately to share good work and to give pupils further guidance. However, too often, teachers' written feedback is not helpful in telling pupils what they need to do to improve. It is often too positive and does not identify mistakes and key learning points.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a warm and welcoming community with a caring and supportive ethos. It supports pupils' social and emotional needs effectively, offering a comprehensive range of well-being interventions. As a result, many pupils learn how to self-regulate their behaviours from an early age.

Support staff and teachers' relationships with pupils and parents are good. Parents are confident in approaching the school with concerns and appreciative that staff act promptly and sensitively to resolve any issues. The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development well. For example, many pupils use the school prayer tree to think about how they can show love and compassion for others in times of need.

The school's provision to identify and support pupils with ALN is effective. The ALN co-ordinator has a good understanding of national reform and supports staff in their

understanding of referral processes successfully. Staff work with parents and a range of external partners when seeking advice for pupils with ALN effectively. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual learning goals.

Opportunities for pupils to have an active role as leaders in the school are suitable. For example, the school has a Criw Cymraeg that helps to promote the daily use of Welsh.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality and diversity are appropriate. For example, as part of the school's work on 'International Women's Day', pupils have opportunities to learn about the lives of inspirational Welsh women such as Dame Shirley Bassey.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to participate in performance events. For example, there is an annual Eisteddfod and Christmas concert. However, opportunities for pupils to take part in sport are limited.

The culture of safeguarding at the school is not robust enough. Most staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. They are aware of procedures to follow should they have a concern about a pupil. However, governors do not have appropriate training and do not understand their role in safeguarding pupils. This means that they cannot fulfil their role as strategic leaders of safeguarding effectively. A health and safety issue was also raised during the inspection. Overall, the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils do not meet requirements and give cause for concern.

The school has suitable procedures in place to monitor and improve attendance. Staff work closely with the local authority to challenge and support families whose children have poor rates of attendance.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher is committed to supporting the well-being of pupils and staff and has established a positive team ethos within a short space of time. Together with the leadership team, she promotes a climate where pupils feel happy and safe in school. However, over time, leadership at all levels has not demonstrated the capacity to identify important areas that the school needs to improve. In addition, the school's track record of making improvements is weak. Improvement work does not focus well enough on improving outcomes for pupils.

Leaders undertake regular monitoring activities such as lesson observations and looking at pupils' work. However, monitoring activity does not focus well enough on the quality of teaching or pupil progress. As a result, areas identified for development are too general and not specific enough to support improvement effectively.

The school is successfully implementing the national priority of reforming provision for pupils with ALN. Staff receive valuable professional learning to support them to improve their work and there are useful opportunities for staff to disseminate good practice across the school. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual learning goals.

The school's progress on implementing the Curriculum for Wales is too slow. Professional learning to support this aspect of the school's work has been ineffective.

Performance management arrangements for teachers do not generally support them to improve their professional practice well enough.

Members of the governing body are keen to support the school. They have regular opportunities to meet with leaders and staff and this helps them to understand new developments and gain an overview of pupil progress. Governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking in school.

The school uses the pupil development grant effectively. For example, pupils who require bespoke interventions to improve their learning or well-being have access to the support they need. The school's inclusive approach ensures that vulnerable pupils access residential trips that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

Over the last three years the school has developed a substantial deficit budget. This is due in part to a reduction in the number of pupils attending the school. The governing body understand the school budget and the reasons for the current deficit. However, the challenge they provide to leaders regarding the management of the school budget is not robust enough. Leaders do not have a plan to address the substantial overspend.

The school's culture of safeguarding is not strong. Governors have not attended appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, the school has not ensured that governors understand their role in relation to important procedures and policies designed to keep pupils safe.

School leaders establish relationships with parents that are productive. They establish lines of communication relating to pupils' learning and well-being successfully. Parents value this clear communication between school and home and this impacts on pupil well-being positively.

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 inspection

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 25/05/2023