



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 Cathedral Primary School

**Caepistyll Street
SA1 2BE**

Date of inspection: February 2022

by

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

About St Joseph's Cathedral Primary School

Name of provider	St Josephs Cathedral Primary School
Local authority	Swansea
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	506
Pupils of statutory school age	367
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	79
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	18.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	15%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	40.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	1 May 2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11 March 2014
Start date of inspection	28 February 2022
Additional information	

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.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
[My Local School](#)

Overview

St Joseph's Cathedral Primary School is a safe, nurturing and vibrant place for pupils, staff and visitors to be. Pupils love coming to school and are proud to be a part of such an inclusive and supportive learning community. The headteacher and the team of teachers and support staff take exceptional care of their pupils and want the best for all of them. As a school that welcomes refugees and people seeking asylum, all pupils and their families can be sure of a warm welcome, whatever their family background, religion or home language and whether they have lived locally for many years or are new to the area.

Pupils know that adults in the school expect them to behave well and work hard. They also understand why education is important and do their very best to succeed. Teachers and support staff are always there to help when needed, but they encourage pupils to develop independence and try to solve problems for themselves whenever possible. They offer pupils an impressive, often practical, range of experiences in school and in the local area, all of which help to keep pupils interested and make learning exciting. Most are making very good progress and achieving well, especially considering the disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic in recent years.

The headteacher provides strong, purposeful leadership. She values the opinions of staff, pupils, parents and governors, and makes sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. The current leadership team is relatively new, but members already work well together, trust one another and provide good support for colleagues. Leaders know the school well overall and have identified important areas of the school's work that they want to improve. This includes improving elements of day-to-day classroom assessment that will help to move pupils on in their learning even further.

Recommendations

R1 Secure teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment so that they can evaluate teaching and learning in their classes and identify how to help pupils move on in their learning

R2 Identify and share the strong practice that exists in the school

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 two case studies for dissemination on Estyn's website. They will be about:

- using digital learning to further pupils' knowledge and understanding and raise standards across the curriculum
- creating a culture of inclusion that supports pupils' well-being, encourages positive attitudes to learning and secures progress and achievement for all.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at St Joseph's, most pupils flourish. They make very good progress from their starting points and achieve high standards. This includes pupils with English as an additional language, and those with additional learning needs. Considering the recent pandemic, the way in which pupils develop and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum is particularly noteworthy.

Most pupils start school with lower-than-expected communication skills and relatively poor personal and social skills. In addition, around a half of pupils enter school with little or no English. Most make rapid progress because of staff's relentless focus on developing pupils' language skills while encouraging their independence and engaging them in learning and active play activities that fascinate them. When exploring activities such as colour mixing, creating bubbles, and making marks in different substances, young pupils concentrate for long periods. They develop creativity when investigating their environment, show curiosity in what they observe, and demonstrate high levels of satisfaction when they realise the effect they have on materials and their environment.

As they move through the school, nearly all pupils learn to listen attentively. Most communicate effectively with one another and engage confidently and maturely with adults. Nursery and reception pupils soon make themselves understood and learn to express themselves clearly as they move through the foundation phase. By Year 2, many answer questions sensibly and explain the work they are doing with understanding. In Key Stage 2, conversations become more sophisticated as pupils begin to adjust their tone for different situations and show appreciation of the opinions of others.

Many pupils show a flair for languages and are proud that their school encourages the use of Welsh, English and pupils' home languages. This celebration of language means that pupils appreciate the benefits of speaking more than one language and are keen to develop their skills. Nursery and reception pupils greet people in Welsh confidently, follow simple instructions and sing songs in Welsh enthusiastically. Older pupils enjoy and participate eagerly in the daily, fast-paced Welsh 'drilio' sessions. They learn a wide range of vocabulary relevant to their class topics and use these words in increasingly complex sentences, questions and answers.

From an early age, many pupils develop a secure understanding of phonics and an interest in books that helps them to develop good reading skills. Involvement in stimulating reading activities means that many enjoy reading and appreciate the benefits of being able to read competently. Most pupils use their reading skills effectively to access learning in all areas of the curriculum. Sessions at the end of the day in Key Stage 2 encourage pupils to see reading as a form of relaxation that can improve their health and well-being.

Overall, pupils' writing skills develop well. They understand from an early age that they can communicate through mark-making, and this motivates them to write as they move through the early stages of their development. Many older pupils make

interesting and varied vocabulary choices in their writing. They write in a wide range of styles and genres with growing confidence as they gain in experience. As a result of a recent work to develop extended writing, pupils are beginning to write more extensively across the curriculum, although this remains an area for further development in the school development plan. Handwriting and presentation are strengths and demonstrate the pride pupils have in their work.

Most pupils make good progress developing their numeracy skills as they move through the school. Nursery pupils develop a good understanding of numbers, size and shape through their play. For example, they describe repeating patterns as they thread cotton reels, and they develop mathematical curiosity and vocabulary in their water play. A few pupils count objects confidently to 10 and recognise and match numerals correctly. Year 1 and 2 pupils build on these skills as they learn to add and subtract numbers and develop a secure understanding of place value in two-digit numbers. By Year 6, many pupils have a secure understanding of place value to millions and use the four rules of number competently. Alongside their skills in number, pupils' understanding of shape, measure and data handling increases steadily. These skills enable pupils to solve problems and apply their skills to real-life situations in other areas of the curriculum.

Throughout the school, pupils' use of digital skills to enhance and advance their learning is a significant strength. From an early age, pupils use digital cameras to record their learning experiences. They log into laptops and access a range of programs independently. Older pupils move seamlessly between digital and traditional methods of recording their work, using photography, film, sound, and the written word to create multi-media presentations. Many use their digital skills well to support independent research, using key word searches and other strategies to find information online. The way that pupils gain an understanding of the lives of others through using augmented reality headsets to 'visit' places such as refugee camps is particularly impressive. Pupils use these experiences maturely to influence how they support refugee pupils and families who are new to the school.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' positive attitudes, their love of learning and their respect for others are inspiring and at the heart of the school's ethos and philosophy. Pupils interact with one other compassionately and sensitively, demonstrating true empathy when talking about world events and sharing their views. For example, older pupils share what it feels like to be an asylum seeker when leading worship during refugee week, and they organise community events to welcome and support new families moving to Swansea. During worship, older pupils share their thoughts and emotions naturally and confidently through prayer.

A strong feature of the school is the positive, caring working relationship that exists amongst pupils, and between adults and pupils. Pupils feel safe and valued. They develop high levels of trust and appreciation for teachers, support staff and education. Pupils' support for one another is mature and thoughtful. They help one another to manage their feelings by talking about strategies they can use to calm and relax themselves, such as listening to music or spending time with Woody, the support dog, a popular visitor to the school.

There is an overwhelming feeling of positivity towards learning in the school. Most pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. They sustain concentration from an early age and focus well when completing tasks alone or with others. Older pupils work collaboratively, listening and responding thoughtfully to the ideas and suggestions of others, for example when considering the 'forensic evidence' they are given to solve crimes in science lessons. Pupils in many classes contribute to their learning appropriately. Younger pupils influence play activities and pupils in Years 3 and 4 suggest 'missions' or challenges they might do to develop their independent learning skills. However, older pupils do not always make choices about how they learn and present their work, often because of a lack of opportunity. This means that their creative thinking skills across the curriculum are less well developed than their other skills.

Most pupils are happy, confident individuals. They know about the importance of healthy eating and drinking and appreciate the benefits of physical exercise. Many participate keenly in the extra-curricular sports activities that the school has recently re-introduced. Pupils speak with interest about the exciting learning experiences they have outside the classroom that support their learning. Study visits to places such as the beach, local rivers, and the Hafod-Morfa copperworks mean that they develop a good understanding of their locality and its importance in Wales and the world. Pupils make innovative use of technology to share these experiences with other pupils back at school. For example, when they are out and about, they use digital cameras to create videos that others can view through virtual reality headsets.

Pupils with positions of responsibility across the school take their roles seriously and use these job opportunities to consolidate their skills and learn new ones. The school council meets regularly and shares its ideas and actions with other pupils. Members of the Criw Cymraeg encourage the use of Welsh around the school and organise fundraising events to buy Welsh resources. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 often support their teachers by designing, researching and leading daily 'drillio sessions' independently. Pupils in the Tech Team provide valuable support and training to pupils and staff, including making sure that pupils know how to keep safe online. They play a significant role in the smooth running of digital technology across the school by sharing information and tips with pupils and staff on digital display screens and logging issues and requests for the school's technician.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The school offers pupils of all ages a wealth of stimulating and purposeful learning experiences. This helps pupils to become rounded, interesting and inquisitive individuals and contributes to raising their aspirations. Teachers develop strong working relationships with pupils throughout the school and treat them with respect, which helps pupils to settle and gain confidence.

The curriculum builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. It reflects the nature of the school and its locality strongly by

giving pupils plenty of opportunities to learn about the history and geography of Swansea and Wales. As well as making generally good use of the school's limited outdoor environment, teachers use local resources purposefully, including a local wetlands centre, Crymlyn Burrows nature reserve and Henrhyd waterfalls, for pupils to study various environments. Pupils meet and question people, such as a local fisherman and a sculptor, about their work and inspiration. This understanding of the locality helps the school to develop its strong Welsh ethos. Provision to develop pupils' understanding of Welsh language, heritage and culture is effective. It encourages pupils from all backgrounds to take pride in living in Wales, while at the same time celebrating and sharing their own cultures, languages and heritages.

Teachers use technology particularly well to enhance the curriculum. For example, when learning about the Second World War, pupils explore a house during World War 2 using virtual reality headsets, build their own working Morse-code devices, and use greenscreen technology to film a news report about the Swansea Blitz. These rich learning experiences engage and immerse pupils in their learning and offer innovative ways to develop pupils' personal and social skills. Providing pupils with real-life experiences like these are a good example of how teachers are beginning to shape their planning and consider the four purposes and the areas of learning and experience in preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales.

In many cases, teachers have good subject knowledge and this helps them to explain concepts clearly. Lessons have clear objectives for pupils' learning and teachers use a range of approaches, well-designed activities and resources to engage and challenge pupils to achieve well. Experienced learning support assistants know pupils' strengths, interests and areas for development well and use this knowledge to observe, challenge and support pupils' learning skilfully. Teachers plan thoughtfully to offer opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they have learned in real-life situations, often related to their topics. Many find interesting ways to encourage pupils to develop their thinking and recall previous learning.

There are good examples of assessment that informs planning in some areas of the school, for example where staff observe pupils at work and play, evaluate how well they are doing, then plan pupils' next steps. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. In a few cases, not knowing what pupils can and cannot do means that teachers plan activities that are too easy or too difficult. Many teachers give pupils feedback as they work, but it does not always help pupils to understand how to improve. Occasionally, teachers structure lessons and lead the learning too much and this inhibits pupils' creativity and independence.

Most teachers encourage pupils to contribute ideas and influence learning in some way. For instance, adults take note of younger pupils' suggestions for activities in specific areas of the learning environment. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have good opportunities to develop independence in their learning by making choices about how they approach their 'missions' or challenges. For example, they choose to use the knowledge and skills they have gained when learning about impressionism to represent a river in their topic on the environment.

Care, support and guidance

The strong culture of inclusion that exists in the school community supports pupils' well-being and secures progress and achievement for all pupils. A contributory factor to this is the encouraging and nurturing approach that adults in the school adopt towards supporting the emotional and social needs of pupils. It helps pupils to engage positively with one another and to enjoy and benefit from their learning. Staff support pupils' physical and mental well-being by introducing them to a range of strategies to help them relax and manage their emotions, including breathing techniques and mindful moments. Along with positive approaches to managing pupils' behaviour, such as processes to resolve conflict between pupils, this contributes to making the school a calm, safe, yet vibrant place for pupils and adults to be.

Regular pupil progress meetings between senior leaders and teachers help to identify pupils who are struggling in specific areas, as well as those who may have additional learning needs and require more specialised support. The school works effectively with outside agencies that provide valuable specialist advice. This enables staff to offer a range of provision, including effective intervention programmes, that meets the needs of pupils well and helps them to make good progress. For example, focused literacy interventions have helped younger pupils to make considerable gains in reading in very short periods of time. Experienced learning support staff know and understand pupils' needs well. Most work skilfully with pupils, communicating clearly with them and helping them to engage with their learning, while also encouraging their independence.

The school's culture promotes pupils' spirituality well and is respectful of all faiths and cultures. Staff and pupils participate together in daily worship and celebrate days that are special to pupils and their families. The work that pupils and staff have done to become a place of sanctuary for all is central to the values of the school. It forms a thread throughout the curriculum and daily life of the school that helps pupils to develop a deep understanding of their own identity, heritage and culture as well as those of their friends. The school's pastoral support extends beyond its walls. For example, the headteacher regularly provides advice, guidance and written support for displaced families and the school has established a 'Pantry' that distributes food parcels and recycles uniform to families affected by loss of earnings.

All pupils have opportunities to participate in performances and events throughout the year, which develop their confidence and self-expression. For example, pupils share their learning with their parents and other pupils during class assemblies and they perform Welsh songs and recitations enthusiastically in their annual Eisteddfod.

The school's arrangements to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Staff promote and support a strong culture of safety and well-being in school and online. The school site has many challenges, which leaders have assessed carefully to develop rigorous procedures to support pupil and staff safety. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and know who to speak to if they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil. Procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance are comprehensive and rigorous. The school offers pastoral support for vulnerable pupils who miss school, and persistent absenteeism

is challenged. The school collaborates appropriately with the Education Welfare Service to address issues of poor attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides strong, effective and purposeful leadership. She has a clear vision for the direction of the school, including high aspirations for pupils' progress and achievement, and she communicates this effectively to all staff and stakeholders. She has established a strong and effective leadership team of individuals who have clear roles and responsibilities and a growing influence on the work of the school. There is a strong culture of trust within this team, and members work well together to support one another and to undertake a range of valuable roles, including mentoring colleagues to improve their teaching, and implementing and evaluating school improvement. Leaders collaborated effectively during the pandemic to establish effective systems to ensure the continuity of learning for pupils and to help them cope with the changes that affected them. The headteacher set clear expectations of leaders and other staff and they reacted quickly throughout the pandemic to adapt approaches to meet the needs of pupils and the community. For example, they used daily live teaching and check-in sessions alongside independent learning tasks to engage pupils and support their progress. Leaders use the pupil development grant effectively to provide support for identified pupils. The school employs skilful teaching and support staff to deliver a range of interventions to these pupils to ensure that they make good progress in their learning. Additional, designated funding is used purposefully, for example, to buy resources to prevent digital exclusion. Leaders monitor the impact of additional provision and resources closely to ensure that all pupils make good progress.

The headteacher has a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the school and manages staff performance effectively. Monitoring processes recognise strengths and identify areas for improvement efficiently, and leaders ensure that staff receive the right support to help them to improve. Constructive professional dialogue during performance management meetings encourages staff to take responsibility for their own professional learning. Staff audit their practice in line with the professional teaching standards, identify their personal areas for development linked to the school's priorities and seek out their own professional learning opportunities. These may involve developing links within the school or with other schools and agencies. Staff value the support they receive from leaders and are keen to widen their experiences. During the pandemic, it has not been possible to share the effective practice that already exists in the school, so new members of the leadership team do not always know where the strongest teaching is. As the school gradually resumes its usual pattern of monitoring teaching, new members of the leadership team are beginning to know where to find aspects of practice to share with others in the school. Leaders also seek opportunities to become involved in wider professional networks that reflect the needs of the school, including the National Network for Excellence in Maths and the national working party for The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin.

Senior leaders have established a culture of self-evaluation that is embedded into the daily life of the school. Leaders combine information about pupil progress, curriculum provision and the quality of teaching skilfully to create a clear picture of the school's strengths and to identify priorities for improvement. A particular strength is the staff's

collaborative approach to evaluating progress. Staff understand their roles in supporting improvement and know that they can give feedback about their experiences and influence what happens next. Leaders evaluate progress and feedback regularly and are not afraid to amend their approaches or change direction if something is not working. For example, after the pandemic, teachers identified areas of weakness in pupils' writing and in their application of numeracy skills. Staff and leaders quickly adapted the improvement priorities to develop a shared approach to strengthening pupils' writing skills and consolidating pupils' ability to use the four rules of number in mathematics. Leaders are developing a range of useful links with outside agencies to support effective self-evaluation. For example, leaders have engaged with the National Resource for Evaluation and Improvement Pilot to consider how the resource can support and improve their self-evaluation processes.

Governors are supportive of the school and have well-established professional links with the headteacher and staff. The headteacher keeps them well informed and supports them to challenge the school in their role as a critical friend. They receive regular updates about progress towards the school's priorities and have benefited from discussions with the leadership team about these. Governors help to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. They are beginning to resume the active role they played in the school before the pandemic, including meeting with teachers to discuss the quality of pupils' work.

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 05/05/2022