

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Special measures

St Josephs R.C.Primary School Neath

**Cook Rees Avenue
Neath
SA11 1UR**

Date of visit: May 2025

by

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

Outcome of visit

St Joseph's RC Primary School Neath is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is maintaining the level of follow-up activity.

Estyn will re-visit the school in around four - six months' time to monitor progress against a sample of the recommendations.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

The Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (Wales) Regulations 2015 state that an induction period may **not** be served in a school requiring special measures i.e. as described in grounds 6 or 8 in section 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (1). The presumption is that schools requiring special measures are not suitable for providing induction for newly qualified teachers, other than in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, schools requiring special measures should not normally appoint a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to their staff.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Address the safeguarding and health and safety issues identified during the inspection

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during this visit.

R2. Improve strategic leadership at all levels and implement effective evaluation and improvement processes that focus on improving outcomes for pupils

The headteacher continues to access leadership and management training through the local authority, including training for newly appointed headteachers. As a result of this ongoing professional learning, she is steadily building her skills and confidence as a leader. In a few important areas, she has raised her expectations of what pupils can achieve and the progress they should make. For example, she has a more accurate view of how well younger pupils' reading skills are developing.

Senior leaders are beginning to drive first hand evaluation of teaching and learning. This has included learning walks, looking at pupils' work and listening to learners. They are increasingly able to identify a few strengths and areas for development. For example, they identified that feedback to pupils was inconsistent. In a few cases evaluations focus suitably on pupils' progress. However, they are often overly generous. In general, the rate of improvement in important areas is too slow. For example, a majority of older pupils' literacy skills remain underdeveloped.

Distributed leadership is beginning to develop suitably in a few areas. Where this is most successful, professional learning opportunities enable leaders to develop specialist knowledge and leadership skills effectively. A few leaders are beginning to share their growing expertise with relevant staff through observations of teaching and informal mentoring. This is beginning to have a positive impact in a few areas. For instance, many younger pupils are now making appropriate progress in reading.

The headteacher works closely with the school's governing body. Governors meet regularly with leaders and receive regular updates on the school's progress towards meeting recommendations in the post inspection action plan. A few governors have been involved in monitoring specific areas of the curriculum. For example, they have visited lessons or spoken to pupils. However, overall, first hand monitoring of the school's work by the governing body is underdeveloped.

The headteacher continues to work closely with the school bursar and governing body to monitor school finances. She considers long term financial decisions carefully and has continued to secure additional grant funding. Although agreed by the local authority, the school's recovery plan does not address the budget deficit.

R3. Improve teaching and assessment

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during this visit.

R4. Improve the curriculum and provision for pupils' skills including their independent learning skills

Leaders and staff are continuing to work as a team to build a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding. They base learning around a range of concepts, such as culture and heritage, from which teachers tailor learning to pupils' stage of development. These are beginning to provide pupils with a wider range of experiences across areas of learning and experience. However, leaders have not yet evaluated this strategy fully to help them understand the extent to which pupils have a breadth of experiences, and how progressive these learning opportunities are. Overall, pupils have limited opportunities to contribute to what and how they learn.

Teachers have continued to implement strategies that help younger pupils improve their reading skills. In general, teachers and learning support staff provide pupils with purposeful opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, such as an understanding of the link between letters and sounds. As a result, many younger pupils are beginning to make stronger progress. Processes for ensuring that older pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their reading skills are not as effective. As a result, a minority of older pupils do not read well enough.

Leaders have mapped out a range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different writing genre as they move through the school, for instance understanding how to write biographies and playscripts. However, older pupils have too few opportunities to write at length and a majority of pupils' writing remains underdeveloped.

The school is embedding more consistent processes to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. There is an appropriate structure to the mathematics curriculum that supports teachers to build on pupils' knowledge and skills competently. In the younger classes, teachers integrate engaging activities into pupils' indoor and outdoor learning suitably. As a result, pupils are beginning to have stronger opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding through hands-on, authentic learning experiences. However, in the older classes, opportunities to learn through practical experience are at an early stage of development.

Teachers are beginning to consider ways in which they can develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. For example, teachers develop pupils' understanding of databases creatively using information collected in Welsh. However, the school has yet to gain an accurate evaluation of how effectively teachers provide these opportunities, over time.

Teachers have improved opportunities for the youngest pupils to make choices, be creative, work collaboratively and develop their physical skills. Overall, they make effective use of the school's outdoor areas to engage pupils and stimulate their imagination. However, teachers do not always consider how different areas of learning and resources contribute to pupils' skill development well enough.

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