

Monmouth Comprehensive School
Old Dixton Road
Monmouthshire
Monmouth
NP25 3YT

This letter is also available in Welsh.

30/01/2025

Dear Hugo Hutchison

Interim visit: January 2025

Thank you for your support in organising our interim visit to the school on the 21st and 22nd of January 2025. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils and hear more about the improvement work the school has undertaken since the core inspection. It was pleasing to see the way in which your staff embraced the process, and the openness they showed during discussions.

During the visit we discussed the progress the school has made in addressing each of the recommendations with leaders, teachers and support staff. We also had the opportunity to:

- Talk with pupils and hear their feedback about the school.
- Visit a sample of lessons across the curriculum to see pupils and staff undertaking their work.
- Scrutinise a sample of pupils' work.
- Undertake joint work scrutiny and lesson observation activities with leaders and discuss the main findings from these activities.

Focus of visit

Strengthen processes to raise the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals

During our visit it was helpful to hear how the school has undertaken an appropriate staffing restructure, including the appointment of an Attendance Officer. Whilst in its initial stages, staff have worked together to identify pupils with declining patterns in

Estyn, Llys Aneur, Heol Keen, Caerdydd,
CF24 5JW Ffôn: 02920 446446
ymholiadau@estyn.llyw.cymru
www.estyn.llyw.cymru

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Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road,
Cardiff, CF24 5JW Telephone: 02920
446446 enquiries@estyn.gov.wales
www.estyn.gov.wales

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attendance at an early stage and are focused on improving the attendance of groups of learners.

It was pleasing to hear about the focus you have placed on securing positive relationships between staff, pupils and their families. Staff are working with families sensitively to identify barriers and agreeing tailored support to improve pupils' attendance. In our meetings, we also heard about the professional learning to help staff to improve attendance through their direct communication with families.

Since the core inspection, there has been an increase in the overall attendance and an increase in the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

It may be useful for the school to consider:

- How can you identify which strategies are having the greatest impact on improving the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals?
- How are you monitoring the new staffing structure to ensure pupils' attendance continues to improve?

Refine self-evaluation processes so that they focus more precisely on the impact of provision on pupils' learning

Since the time of the last inspection, the school has worked to strengthen its self-evaluation processes. There is a clear calendar of activities to gain first-hand information about the quality of teaching which is supported by regular line management meetings. Staff have developed a useful system of recording improvement plans and findings of self-evaluation activities. Despite this, there remains too much variability among leaders' evaluation of the impact of provision on learning. In the most effective examples, leaders distinguish clearly between teaching and the progress pupils make in their knowledge, understanding and skills which supports more precise improvement planning. However, there are instances where leaders do not evaluate the impact of provision on learning closely enough and do not plan for improvement precisely enough. While leaders have supported one another and the staff they lead to carry out self-evaluation, they have not been offered targeted professional learning on how to evaluate the impact of provision on learning.

It may be useful for the school to consider:

- How will you share the good practice identified during this visit?
- What professional learning would help leaders to evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' learning?

Ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to learn about the language, culture and heritage of Wales

It was interesting to hear that the Welsh department has focused on developing pupils' oracy skills to enhance their fluency and confidence in using the language. We heard that pupils benefit further from engaging initiatives such as 'Clwb Clecs,' which provides informal opportunities to practise Welsh. The school has invested in professional learning to support teachers in incorporating Welsh phrases and commands across the curriculum, which was evident during the visit. In our discussions, we heard that promoting a Welsh ethos is a key priority, with a focus on developing cultural richness through activities such as listening to guest speakers and performances by Welsh artists. The school has also strengthened links with external organisations to provide pupils with valuable opportunities to explore the benefits of bilingualism through visits to Welsh universities and interactions with professionals.

It may be useful for the school to consider:

- How can you embed the Welsh language across all areas of the curriculum to strengthen pupils' fluency and confidence?
- How can you ensure that all staff use the language as a part of their everyday routines?

Thank you again for all your help in planning and organising our visit. We wish you well with your future developments.

The school's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6794060>

Yours sincerely



Catherine Evans
Assistant Director