

**Report following monitoring**

**Level of follow-up: Special measures**

**Cwmbran High School**

**Ty Gwyn Way  
Fairwater  
Cwmbran  
NP44 4YZ**

**Date of visit: March 2025**

**by**

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

## Outcome of visit

Cwmbran High School is judged to have made sufficient 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 removing the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **R1. Improve the standard of pupils' skills, particularly their writing, and numeracy**

In many lessons, pupils generally make sound progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a few instances, pupils are challenged well by their teachers to make strong progress in their learning. In a minority of lessons pupils make limited progress, mainly because teachers' expectations are not high enough or because pupils do not engage well enough in their learning.

Many pupils read to extract meaning and identify relevant information appropriately. When given worthwhile opportunities, they summarise and analyse texts well. In relevant subjects, pupils use more advanced reading skills suitably. Overall, the quality of pupils' writing has improved since the core inspection. The majority write with suitable accuracy and structure extended pieces appropriately. They demonstrate a sound understanding of purpose and audience. However, around half of pupils continue to make basic errors in their writing and do not express their ideas clearly enough. Few pupils proofread their work or look to improve it before they hand it to the teacher.

Many pupils have a suitable grasp of basic number skills and use the four rules of number accurately. In a few cases, they have a strong grasp of these rules, for example when working with rational and irrational numbers. However, a few pupils make basic errors when performing simple calculations and struggle to recall multiplication facts. In relevant subjects across the curriculum, pupils construct and interpret a range of graphs suitably. A majority have a suitable understanding of shape and measures and use the conventions of algebra accurately. However, the progress of pupils' numeracy skills is sometimes negatively impacted by weaker teaching.

## **R2. Improve the behaviour and disrespectful attitudes of a few pupils in a minority of lessons**

Since the appointment of the new leadership team, the school has strengthened strategic pastoral leadership. This has helped to improve pupils' behaviour and engagement in lessons. The school has also begun to improve pupils' attendance, although this remains substantially below that prior to the pandemic.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and are courteous toward their teachers, peers and visitors. Many organise and present their work suitably, although a minority do not take sufficient pride or care in its presentation.

The school has continued to focus on developing strategies to improve pupils' resilience and perseverance in their learning, and this is beginning to have a positive impact. Many pupils listen respectfully to their teachers and the majority engage positively in their learning. However, a minority of pupils are often too passive in their learning and do not engage fully in activities, limiting the progress that they make.

## **R3. Ensure that the literacy and numeracy framework is implemented fully**

Despite staffing challenges, leaders have continued to prioritise improvements to the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills. Whole school approaches to planning and evaluating skills have been streamlined. As a result, leaders have a broad understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in this aspect of their work. In addition, staff are clear of their role in developing pupils' skills alongside their subject knowledge and understanding.

The school has continued to foster a culture of and enjoyment in reading, including dedicated reading time at the start of lessons. Pupils are beginning to benefit from using reading skills beyond information retrieval in more challenging contexts. Teachers now pay greater attention to developing pupils' vocabulary. Generally, their expectations of pupils' use of it in written and verbal responses have increased, although standards remain too variable. Opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing have remained constant, though too many pupils continue to make basic errors. The school has worked very conscientiously to quality assure relevant provision including useful frameworks they have developed. However, the evaluation of the impact of provision on the development of pupils' skills remains at an early stage.

Recently, leaders at all levels have started to sharpen their focus on improving the provision for pupils' numeracy skills. This has included working with individual departments to carry out professional enquiries to consider the impact of provision on

pupils' progress. In addition, the pedagogy lead for numeracy has provided helpful support to targeted departments, including the development of beneficial toolkits. The school has prioritised improving the teaching of mathematics and has supported relevant subjects to develop pupils' data handling skills. As a result, there are now more beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their data-handling skills, including calculating averages and plotting and interpreting a range of graphs. However, opportunities to develop other aspects of pupils' numeracy skills in relevant subjects across the curriculum remain at an early stage of development.

#### **R4. Address the shortcomings in teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress in all lessons**

The school has maintained a clear focus on improving the specific aspects of teaching that are most in need of development. Teachers have benefitted from a broad range of professional learning that has led to some improvement in the quality of planning and questioning.

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and establish positive working relationships with pupils to foster a more positive learning environment. Many have suitable expectations of what pupils can do and use engaging resources to support pupils' development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. These teachers often use questioning appropriately to check for pupils' recall, although their use of questioning to probe pupils understanding and develop their thinking is still too variable.

A few teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They plan carefully structured lessons including demanding tasks and secure a good pace of learning. These teachers also adapt the pace and challenge of their lessons appropriately in response to pupils' progress.

Many teachers circulate the room regularly to monitor pupils' progress and provide them with useful verbal feedback, addressing misconceptions where necessary.

Despite these important improvements in the quality of teaching, there are still shortcomings in a minority of lessons. Although teachers have begun to develop their approaches to learning, too often their expectations of what pupils can do are too low and they do not challenge pupils well enough when they are passive in class.

## **R5. Improve the consistency in the work of middle managers, particularly in planning for improvement**

The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, has established a clear and ambitious vision for school improvement. Together, they are working purposefully to support the development of all staff, fostering a commitment to continuous improvement. This shared vision promotes a sense of ownership amongst staff, and particularly middle leaders, who now take increasing responsibility for their roles in securing improvement. This has supported a positive shift in school culture. Staff express confidence in the continuity of leadership and feel trusted by senior leaders. As a result, they are more open to refining and improving teaching across the school.

Following the conclusion of the Interim Executive Board arrangements, the newly established governing body provides valuable support and suitable levels of challenge to senior leaders. Governors are becoming increasingly effective in holding leaders to account, particularly in relation to the school's improvement priorities.

The recent restructuring of middle leadership roles has brought greater clarity and accountability. Middle leaders now have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities for improving teaching. They work effectively alongside skills and pedagogical leads, who provide targeted coaching and helpful professional learning. However, middle leaders do not evaluate the impact of teaching on pupil learning robustly enough. This is because they place too much emphasis on describing provision.

Middle leaders play an active role in whole-school quality assurance processes. The joint activities with senior leaders help to secure greater consistency in the evaluation of teaching. 'Area Reviews' are developing well and provide leaders with useful insights into classroom practice while also helping to strengthen middle leaders' leadership skills. Senior leaders challenge each other and middle leaders well, through purposeful discussions during line management meetings. There is increasing consistency in how well leaders hold staff to account, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching.

Curriculum and phase leaders undertake meaningful self-evaluation activities aligned to their area development plans. These are reviewed regularly during line management meetings to ensure ongoing progress against improvement priorities. Senior leaders maintain high expectations of all middle leaders. Although some variation in practice remains, this is reducing due to more focused support and challenge.

**© Crown Copyright 2025: 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.**