

Mark Tucker
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The John Frost School
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06/05/2025

Dear Mark Tucker

Interim visit: April 2025

Thank you for your support during our interim visit to the school on the 7th and 8th of April 2025. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils and hear more about the improvement work that the school has carried out since the core inspection in March 2020.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to:

- speak with senior and middle leaders about the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes;
- discuss with senior leaders the progress the school has made in addressing the recommendations from the last core inspection;
- talk with pupils across all year groups and hear their feedback about the school;
- speak with a group of teachers about their work;
- conduct a series of joint lesson observations and work scrutiny activities with senior leaders;
- observe a sample of teaching and learning sessions across the curriculum.

Focus of visit

To what extent has the school improved the quality of teaching and assessment across the school?

Senior leaders have worked deliberately to establish a collaborative culture to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Their vision of 'connect, communicate and collaborate' is well understood by staff, who value the emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Staff spoken to during this visit are committed to professional dialogue and

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the regular sharing of practice, particularly through the school's weekly teaching and learning briefings and through activities such as learning walks.

Since the core inspection, the school has taken suitable steps to review assessment practices, including conducting a helpful audit of current approaches across the curriculum. This has enabled some departments to refine their strategies. During the visit a few leaders discussed how they have established helpful systems for marking, feedback and assessment that reflect the distinct nature of their subject. These approaches offer clear guidance to teachers and help pupils to improve their work.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How do leaders ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of effective teaching, learning and assessment?
- How do leaders ensure that assessment and feedback strategies support subject disciplines?

How well is the school improving pupils' standards in speaking, writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills?

During the visit, we were pleased to hear that the school has continued to provide professional learning opportunities for staff focused on strategies to enhance pupils' literacy skills. For example, we heard about the initiative to boost pupils' confidence in speaking across various contexts, through 'The John Frost Voice'. It was encouraging to learn about the school's efforts to foster a reading culture, particularly by giving younger pupils the opportunity to visit the library fortnightly to nurture their enjoyment of reading. Leaders identify pupils with low reading scores and prioritise them for targeted interventions and track their progress regularly. The school has recently introduced a whole school writing strategy, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on pupils' writing skills.

The school has adopted a sensible approach to developing pupils' digital skills. Staff have benefited from a range of professional learning opportunities which have upskilled them effectively. Pupils are beginning to apply their digital skills in a few meaningful contexts, including within information and communication technology (ICT) lessons.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How do leaders evaluate the impact of the strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills?
- How do leaders ensure that all digital tasks across the curriculum offer a suitable level of challenge for all pupils?

To what extent do the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes focus on and lead to improvements in pupils' standards and skills?

During the visit, senior leaders explained how they use a comprehensive range of self-evaluation activities to gather a breadth of evidence to evaluate their work. For example, they regularly gather pupils' views and carry out short learning walks, alongside work scrutiny. Senior leaders outlined how they consider and compare their findings in order to come to their overall broad evaluation of teaching.

Senior leaders told us how their self-evaluation processes have enabled them to identify general aspects of teaching or assessment that need to be sharpened. They have ensured teachers have regular professional learning opportunities to share good practice and access to helpful resources such as the 'Tools for Teaching' pack. Middle leaders we spoke to also outlined how their learning walks and work scrutiny help to give them a broad overview of their team's work.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How do leaders ensure that they identify, prioritise and focus relentlessly on improving the key aspects of teaching that will have the greatest impact on pupil progress?
- How does the school ensure that middle leaders evaluate robustly the impact of teaching on learning in their areas of responsibility?

Thank you again for all your help to plan and arrange our visit. We wish you well for the future.

The school's/PRU'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/6804020>

Yours sincerely



Catherine Evans
Assistant Director