

From:
To:
Subject: 12 25 08 St David's High School - FOI response
Date: 15 July 2025 15:18:08
Attachments:

Dear – please find attached letter and documentation in response to your recent request under Freedom of Information.

Yours sincerely

Robert

Robert Gairey
Swyddog Arweiniol Cyhoeddiadau / Lead Officer:
Publications

Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi Dros Addysg A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales

Ffôn | Phone: 02920446309

Ebost | Email: robert.gairey@estyn.gov.wales

Cyfeiriad: Llys Angor, Heol Keen, Caerdydd, CF24 5JW

Address: Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW



www.estyn.llyw.cymru | www.estyn.gov.wales



Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth.

Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

Dear

15 July 2025

Request for information

I can now present the findings of the recent Freedom of Information request that you submitted along with your complaint, regarding correspondence between Estyn and the two named officers of Flintshire County Council.

When dealing with requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'Act'), Estyn's obligations include:-

1. Confirming or denying whether it holds information of the description specified in the request; and
2. Communicating the information requested to the applicant.

There are a number of exemptions under the Act that impact these obligations. Estyn is required to consider whether an exemption applies in the context of the information being released into the public domain. Not in the context of the information being released to the particular applicant that has requested the information.

If Estyn releases information in response to a Freedom of Information request, this is essentially a decision that the information can be released in response to any similar request from any member of the public, and that it will be in the public domain.

In response to your request for the email, I attach the 12 documents which, following a document trawl within Estyn, were found to come within the scope of your request.

Estyn, Llys Angor/Anchor Court, Heol Keen/Keen Road, Caerdydd/Cardiff, CF24 5JW
Ffôn/Telephone 02920 446446

ymholiadau@estyn.llyw.cymru • enquiries@estyn.gov.wales
www.estyn.llyw.cymru • www.estyn.gov.wales

Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth.	Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.
--	---

Third party personal data

You will note that personal names and job titles have been redacted from the accompanying documents. It is my view that some of the information held within the above request constitutes the personal data of a third party and therefore falls to be considered under section 40(2) of the FOIA.

The exemption contained in section 40(2) of the Act applies where the information requested contains the personal data of a third party and disclosure of the information would breach one of the data protection principles contained in Article 5 of the UK GDPR. This exemption is an absolute exemption, which is not subject to the public interest test.

If you are not satisfied with the decision Estyn has taken regarding your request for information, you are entitled to request that we review the matter. Your request for a review should be addressed to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, and received no later than 20 working days after the date of this communication.

If you are still not satisfied, you also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Email: enquiries@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Robert Gairey
FOI Case Officer

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject: St David's High School Flintshire
Date: 27 March 2023 14:51:15
Attachments: [LA Response to School Letter to SPMG final 27.3.23.docx](#)
[Final Letter to SPMG 27022023.docx](#)

RHYBUDD: Deilliodd yr e-bost hwn o du allan i system E-bost ESTYN. Peidiwch ag ateb, na chlicio ar ddolenni nac agor atodiadau oni bai eich bod yn adnabod cyfeiriad e-bost yr anfonwr ac yn gwybod bod y cynnwys yn ddiogel. WARNING: This email originated from outside ESTYN's email system. Do not reply, click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender's email address and know the content is safe.

Dear

Please find attached the Council's response to the last communication from the
at St David's High School, which is also attached for your information /context.

Kind regards

For the attention of:

St David's High School

Via Email

Your Ref/Eich Cy:

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 27th March 2023

Ask for/Gofynner

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Please see my responses to the comments make in your letter to Members of the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) sent on 27th February 2023.

The Council does not accept your assertion that St David's High School is being neglected for investment and that it is prioritising 'more affluent areas of Flintshire'. Decisions on school investment are based on a variety of factors including information gathered through suitability and condition surveys, pupil numbers, quality of education provided and affordability/value for money. This is referenced in our School Modernisation Strategy. St David's High School is included in the Council's Band B/Sustainable Learning Communities Strategic Outline Programme for investment.

As Welsh Government generally funds 65% of any new build and the Council has to borrow to meet the remainder, there has to be a very strong business case to secure financial commitment from both Welsh Government and from the Council. With the low numbers at St David's High School and no major improvement to future pupil projections, the level of the school's budget deficit and the concerns about the quality of educational provision, there has to be a degree of realism that securing support for a business case to build a new secondary school in the area is going to be a significant challenge.

Nevertheless, the Council has committed to undertake an informal consultation in the Saltney/Broughton area to engage with the community about the shape of the future education offer and encourage their participation. This work was unfortunately delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and local government elections as consultations could not be undertaken at this time. All headteachers in the area have been part of the process in developing this consultation and we will be re-engaging with them this week to discuss the final version before issuing it into the public domain after the Easter break.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
 Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.siryfflint.gov.uk



With regard to the concerns you have raised specifically around defects in the building, again the Council does not accept that St David's High School is being neglected. Under the Scheme for Financing Schools, it is the responsibility of the school to take remedial action via its Repairs and Maintenance budget to deal with any issues in the first instance. I note that the school has only signed up for the lowest level of SLA support with Property Services. This was not stipulated by the Local Authority and it would have supported a request to purchase a higher level of service had it been approached on this matter.

Despite the level of support purchased by the SLA, it is the Council's view that the school has not been prompt in bringing significant issues to the attention of the relevant officers in the Education Portfolio or Property Services. There is no record of concern about the roof having being shared with any officer prior to this being raised in the School Performance Monitoring meeting. Once it was raised, the Council has undertaken investigations and sought costs for repair. The Council will pay for those repairs and any required remedial work to internal decoration and I have personally authorised that work to be undertaken as quickly as possible. Despite two visits to the school by

, once just before Christmas and again in March, no concerns were raised with about problems with the boiler resulting in the heating not reaching the top floor, so it is disingenuous to claim the Council is at fault. Please provide appropriate evidence of how the school has used its Repairs and Maintenance budget to address these issues in a timely fashion and where it has escalated such issues to the relevant officer if it was felt it was beyond the capacity of the school to remedy.

The Council notes, but does not necessarily agree with your assertion that its previous transport policy decisions have adversely affected St David's High School and this has resulted in established links with Cheshire schools continuing to have a current impact. The S2 bus route was withdrawn in July 2020 after the Council had undertaken a review of historical anomalies in its provision. Parents select a school for a variety of reasons but generally the quality of the education of offer is usually the determining factor. Parents were paying fares for their children to travel to Chester to support their personal choice of school. Perhaps the school needs to reflect more on why this might be the case.

The Council does not accept that because of the licensed deficit agreement, funding coming into the school has been directed to be 'ring fenced purely for paying down the debt'. Whilst there has been a strong focus from Council officers to ensure that the debt is appropriately managed under the Licensed Deficit procedures, officers have also been very clear that the needs of current pupils have to be appropriately met and have supported spending decisions to enable this. These have included (and this is not an exhaustive list) improvements to safeguarding arrangements at the front entrance (approx £6k), additional IT funding (£20k), exam intervention costs (£1k) and funding to support the weekly transition activities in the primary schools for two teachers, 1 day per week for 38 weeks for two years, totalling £37,800 in the hope of boosting transfer rates, particularly from

St David's High School has also benefited considerably from the Council's decision to make additional funding available to support secondary school budgets, particularly those in deficit and those with lower than optimum numbers. For the 2021-22 financial year, St

David's received **£465,268** and will receive **£450,988** for the 2022-23 financial year. This is substantial financial assistance provided by the Council to shore up the school's precarious budgetary position in order to protect learners.

The Education Portfolio has also allowed many school requests for posts to be advertised when they have become vacant across teaching, technical and classroom support roles to sustain the curriculum and pastoral offer. On occasions it has been the school's decision not to proceed with that recruitment. However, it is also appropriate under that protocol that we do challenge the school's staffing plans to ensure they are appropriate and affordable. I note that the school was offered additional intervention funding to assist with particular projects e.g. nurture, but to the best of my knowledge, the business case from the school was never forthcoming.

With regard to your assertion that _____ denies a conversation ever took place between Estyn and the Local Authority, I can assure you that it did. One of the other inspectors who was part of that engagement visit had obviously contacted our _____ to express concerns about what _____ had observed at the school and that was communicated to us in our LALI meeting which took place just after the engagement visit to the school. We were specifically asked by _____ for our view of the provision at St David's High School and if it was on our list of schools causing concern because of the feedback _____ had received directly. I strongly object to your inference that I as _____, my _____ and _____ are being untruthful. We were all in the meeting when this direct question was put to us.

I can assure you that our Warning Notice has not been issued on the basis of the Estyn engagement visit and the subsequent comments. The Warning Notice has been issued on the evidence provided by GwE, and through our own interactions with the school, because of concerns about the pace of progress being made against its improvement priorities, concerns about leadership and governance and the risk of the school being placed in a statutory category by Estyn when they revisit. St David's High School continues to require more intervention than any other Flintshire school and the 360° plan was agreed with the school under the Schools Causing Concern protocol. The Local Authority is confident it has presented a balanced view of the school to Estyn - it is required to provide termly updates on schools identified as 'causing concern'. The Local Authority has no control over the timing of Estyn inspections - the school was last inspected in 2016 so is within the group of Flintshire schools which can expect a visit in the current cycle.

The Local Authority is exercising its statutory function to issue a Warning Notice because it is confident that the school requires significant intervention in the best interest of its learners. Your reference to the Warning Notice having a potentially damaging impact on the community perception of the school is irrelevant. The Warning Notice is a confidential process between the Local Authority and the school. Obviously, Estyn reports are in the public domain and this is what the school should be more concerned about and focusing its efforts on to ensure that any future report is positive.

I am not reassured by your letter to the members of the SPMG that the school is focused on its improvement priorities as your letter spends more time criticising the Council and appears to be an attempt to deflect attention from the shortcomings at the school rather than reflecting on what is being done by leaders and governors to support the learners and make the improvements needed. I am also concerned that the school is refusing to further engage with the SPMG process and any evaluative work by GwE, which suggests it is hiding from scrutiny rather than seeing it as a mechanism to demonstrate how it is making progress in the best interests of its learners and ensure the support being offered is effective and appropriate.

You will recall that the Warning Notice specifically advised you, _____, to share it with the full governing body. Please provide evidence of the discussions that have been held with the full governing body in relation to this Warning Notice so that I am assured that the school's response and actions undertaken to date, which are referred to within your communications, are understood and supported by the governing body and not unilateral decisions taken by _____ and _____. Copies of governing body agendas and minutes should be provided.

In relation to two other matters raised in your letter, _____ made _____ statement about the reintroduction of performance measures after the original Warning Notice had been issued. _____ statement, and that by Estyn on this issue, makes it very clear that performance measures should only be used for the school's own improvement purposes and that a range of qualitative and quantitative information will be used to make assessments of a school's performance. This reinforces the previous advice given to you by the Council. In relation to the attendance issues, there continues to be a discrepancy in the way LA reports and school reports are being taken from SIMS and this is being investigated. A more detailed response will be given in due course.

Once again, I would urge _____ and the governing body to focus on the improvement priorities identified in the 360° degree support plan and re-engage with GwE and the Local Authority. This would support the best outcomes for the learners at St David's High School and avoid a potentially damaging future Estyn inspection.

I await the specific information I have requested.



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

27th February 2023

Dear Members of the SPMG,

Following the outcome of the recent meeting of the SPMG group, I am writing to you to express my disappointment at the actions of the SPMG and the Local Authority. Next week, we will be taking our appeal to the Welsh Government and outlining our case for an inappropriate Warning Notice. I have attached our response to the Warning Notice, and the Local Authority's response to letter.

I feel that after receiving the response from [redacted] I need to make the members of the SPMG aware of the role that the Local Authority historically have played in the school's current situation. I would like [redacted] and the elected members of the SPMG to know that the previous actions (or failure to act) of the LA have contributed significantly to the position we now find ourselves in. These are not observations or interpretations, but are known facts that are in the public domain.

Before [redacted] was appointed to the position of [redacted] the Local Authority were paying for pupils in the Saltney/Broughton catchment area to be transported to Cheshire schools. The LA were subsidising learners to leave Flintshire provision and join Cheshire schools. This bill was picked up by the Flintshire tax payer. Fortunately, this practice was eventually stopped, but not before many Flintshire families had established links with Cheshire schools, ties that still exist today. Obviously, this has had a detrimental impact on St. David's pupil numbers, something the local authority has not disclosed publicly, or to members of the SPMG.

Despite many attempts to influence LA spending, and provide up to date facilities for the pupils of St. David's, the Governors have failed to secure any commitment to a new school build in the Saltney/Broughton area, despite years of reassurance that the 'LA are committed to a school in the Saltney/ Broughton area'. We are the only school in Flintshire without an all-weather pitch and our facilities lag behind every other school in Flintshire. We are constantly repairing the roof and the children often sit in coats in many lessons, because of the heating not reaching the top floor. These are just two of the major issues we have in a building that is being neglected and not receiving investment.



However, despite the tight budget constraints, the LA and the local members are still investing in capital projects in the more affluent areas of Flintshire. Our new library, literacy garden and gym facilities have been financed entirely by grant funding, and the goodwill of our community. What we have achieved with very little support from the LA has been remarkable, but unfortunately our pupils still don't have parity of resources with learners in other areas of Flintshire.

The Warning Notice states, 'that many local parents do not have confidence in the learning offer at St David's High School.' I would be interested to know where this statement has been sourced as I have evidence to the contrary. Many parents do have confidence in the learning offer, but they don't have confidence in the facilities that the Local Authority have provided.

Furthermore, previous Headteachers were given no restraints on school spending, and under the Local Authority they were allowed to accumulate more than £800,000 of debt. The current and have successfully reduced the debt by restructuring and careful recruitment. We acknowledge that the LA have contributed considerable sums of money towards reducing the deficit, but this money has been ring fenced purely for paying down the debt, not on the pupils in our care, or the facilities we are able to offer.

In letter dated 16th February, has stated,

"In addition, you will recall a long meeting I held with yourself and with on 16th March 2022 to discuss some concerns related to an Estyn engagement visit to the school in early March. The inspection team had taken the unprecedented action of alerting of their concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning which had been informally observed as part of that visit. Those concerns were relayed to myself and senior officers of the Authority and GwE in our regular meeting with Estyn just after that school visit and we were challenged about your current performance and progress since being removed from follow up in 2018."

For clarification on this point, Estyn deny the conversation ever took place and have categorically denied 'alerting' the local authority. I have written confirmation from confirming this.

I will be asking to investigate this statement, because Estyn are adamant that no conversation has taken place about the quality of the teaching provision or books. Here is the full statement from The statement was emailed to on 22/03/22.

"Annwyl

Thank you for your email with regards to the engagement visit held on the 8th of March.

As you know, our Local Authority Link Inspectors meet with the local authority on a termly basis. These visits do include an opportunity to discuss individual schools and discuss Estyn's work in the local authority. As the meeting occurred after the engagement visit, St David's was included in their discussions.

The link inspectors reiterated the information we shared with you during the engagement visit to St David's. We discussed that you may want to consider how you develop your self-evaluation processes to consider the impact of teaching and the changes to the curriculum on pupils' progress and

standards. The link inspectors asked the local authority about its view on the school's evaluation processes. No discussion was had on the quality of teaching and work in books during our professional dialogue at the end of the engagement visit or during the LA link inspectors meeting.

I hope that this clarifies the situation.

Cofion Cynnes / Kind Regards,

As you can see this is a very clear statement from the HMI.

I also need to make the SPMG aware that the Estyn Engagement Visit to which the letter refers was focused on Curriculum for Wales, and Estyn had no remit to comment on the quality of teaching or books. As you can see from Estyn's own guidance,

The visit or call is not an inspection. There will be no judgements or a written report. The aim of the visit or call is to see how schools are working towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales. We will also have conversations with about their early work on the new additional learning needs requirements. We aim that the visits are supportive and a positive learning experience for us and the school/PRU.

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/faq/will-schools-be-judged-engagement-visitphone-call>

Estyn would be breaking its own guidance by passing judgement even if it was done 'informally'. It seems that the LA are basing a large part of their Warning Notice on a visit where Estyn had no authority to judge and deny making any judgement.

I will be asking to investigate this point, as the LA have now committed in writing that this conversation has taken place and Estyn has confirmed that this conversation has not taken place. This discrepancy will need to be addressed as it now been made clear by the Local Authority that the alleged actions of Estyn have directly led to the issuing of the Warning Notice.

You were correct to note that our reply was written in a very legalistic style and I can confirm this is the case. I can also confirm that this was not paid out of delegated budget, and I can further confirm that any future legal advice will not be paid out of delegated budget. Following review, we have not breached the *Protocols for Schools in Financial Difficulty*.

The letter received from states that a reliance on core data sets is not going to be relevant in a future inspection. This contradicts the statement issued by on the 2nd February 2023 which states a resumption of KS4 measure including outcome data which will be included in the All Wales Core data set.

The letter also refers to the high levels of support offered by GwE officers, this is somewhat misleading. The School has not directly requested such support and the number of days per year that are stated are in fact half days visits, which actually equates to between 3.07% and 5.5% of that academic year.

The letter further states that discrepancies in the attendance data are being investigated. School have been working closely with the Local Authority and ESS who support the SIMS system, and we are confident our data is accurate. This has been relayed to

who indicated to _____ involved that that the school had raised this query, which obviously was not the case.

_____ has raised further points that were not included in the original warning notice and we will be addressing these points with Welsh Government directly. However, I do want to address one further point made by _____,

“Your response to date, and comments we believe made recently by _____ to the school’s _____, only confirm our concerns that the school is not focusing on the most important priorities and has an unrealistic view of its current performance.”

I can assure you that _____ is fully focused on school improvements and has entirely realistic view of the school’s current performance. The only ‘distraction’ _____ and myself are currently facing is the one being caused by the actions of the Local Authority. The response letter issued on 16th February states that no additional burdens have been placed on the school as a result of the Warning Notice, and the 360-support plan is the main vehicle for securing the improvement. Therefore, this begs the question what has been achieved by issuing the Warning Notice? The school have been engaging fully and making progress in relation to this.

In relation to the SPMG planned for March, the school will not be attending any future meetings until we have received notification from _____ of the outcome of our appeal. If _____ upholds the Warning Notice we will re-engage with SPMG and GwE, but we will insist on attending when it is mutually convenient for all parties. The school will also insist on having representation to take the minutes. As to date there hasn’t been any records that accurately reflect the conversations that have taken place.

Myself, _____, _____ and SLT are still struggling to comprehend what the LA and elected members have to gain from the actions they have taken. We fail to see the reasoning for pursuing something that would have such a detrimental and devastating effect on the learners of our community. When the news is made public, it will lead to parents not sending their children to St. David’s and staff leaving because of the Warning Notice. I am also concerned that the LA has now provided Estyn with inaccurate and prejudicial information, and this will potentially trigger an inspection. I really am struggling to see how the LA’s current actions are going to improve teaching and learning at St. David’s.

Despite assumptions to the contrary I would like to assure members of the SPMG that the school is not wasting time and energy fighting this decision. We are fully aware of, and completely focused on the priorities that are needed to improve the school, and only have the best interests of our pupils and staff in challenging this decision.

As always myself and _____ are open to dialogue and engagement and if any member of the SPMG would like further information or clarification on any of our points please feel free to contact the school.

Kind Regards,

From:
To:
Subject: FW: Confidential Flintshire Response to Complaint re Warning Notice SDHS
Date: 09 May 2023 16:40:53
Attachments: [FCC Response to SDHS Warning Notice Complaint 9.5.23.pdf](#)
[List of Appendices.pdf](#)
[Appendix 1a SPMG St David's High School Saltney Invitation March 2020.pdf](#)
[Appendix 1b SPMG Agendas & Action Notes 2020-2023.pdf](#)
[Appendix 2 Supporting Evidence on SDHS Performance.pdf](#)
[Appendix 3 360 Support Plan SDHS Updated November 22.pdf](#)
[Appendix 4 360 Evaluation of Teaching and Learning March 2022.pdf](#)
[Appendix 5 SDHS Warning Notice Jan 2023.pdf](#)
[Appendix 6 SDHS Response to warning notice.pdf](#)
[Appendix 7 LA Response to CoG 16.2.23.pdf](#)
[Appendix 8 LA Response to School Letter to SPMG final 27.3.23.pdf](#)
[Appendix 9 LA Request for Governance Documentation 24.4.23.pdf](#)
[Appendix 10 Letter to C Homard 28042023.pdf](#)
[Appendix 11 LA Response re Governance & Warning Notice 8.5.23.pdf](#)
[Appendix 12 Attendance Data .pdf](#)
[Appendix 13 Admissions Issue.pdf](#)

RHYBUDD: Deilliodd yr e-bost hwn o du allan i system E-bost ESTYN. Peidiwch ag ateb, na chlicio ar ddolenni nac agor atodiadau oni bai eich bod yn adnabod cyfeiriad e-bost yr anfonwr ac yn gwybod bod y cynnwys yn ddiogel. WARNING: This email originated from outside ESTYN's email system. Do not reply, click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender's email address and know the content is safe.

Dear

Please find our response to Welsh Government in relation to the complaint raised by St David's High School to the Warning Notice for your information.

Kind regards

From:

Sent: 09 May 2023 16:37

To:

Subject: Confidential Flintshire Response to Complaint re Warning Notice SDHS

Dear

Please find attached our formal letter of response to the complaint from St David's High School and supporting appendices.

I hope this meets with your requirements and we look forward to receiving your adjudication.

I would appreciate if you would confirm that you have received the letter and 13 appendices and that you are able to open them all successfully.

Kind regards

For the attention of:

Curriculum, Assessment & School Improvement Division
Education, Social Justice & Welsh Language Group
Welsh Government

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 9th May 2023

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Complaint against Warning Notice – St David's High School

Thank you for your letter of 19th April 2023 in which you invite us to provide evidence to enable Welsh Ministers to consider the school's complaint against the issuing of a Warning Notice and determine whether

- a) the authority has complied with the procedural requirements set out in the 2013 Act and the Guidance; and
- b) whether the authority has acted reasonably in issuing the notice.

It is our position that the authority has complied with both of these criteria and we provide the following information to support our position.

We note that in the Warning Notice to the school there was a reference to the 2016 Schools Causing Concern guidance, which we are aware was refreshed in 2017. This was a typographical error. We do not believe that this makes a substantive difference to the validity of the Warning Notice as the six grounds for a Warning Notice are enshrined in Section 3 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

We think that it is important we provide some overall context about how the processes around 'schools causing concern' are managed here in Flintshire and how decisions are made to escalate schools through the statutory processes. This should provide Welsh Ministers with the reassurance that there is a robust and effective process within Flintshire County Council that has demonstrably improved school performance and, ultimately, outcomes for learners and that this is achieved through respectful, professional and constructive dialogue with school leaders.

Since 2012, in response to recommendations in its own local authority inspection, the Education Portfolio established a mechanism called the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG). The group is led by _____, supported by _____ and includes elected members from _____.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug. CH7 6ND
www.sirymflint.gov.uk



the Council's Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Since the introduction of the regional school improvement consortium (GwE),

are also attendees. Where a school is identified as causing concern by the LA and GwE, or where it has been placed in a follow up category by Estyn, the school will be brought under the remit of the SPMG. This is always discussed with the school in advance of receiving any formal letter from so that the reasons for the decision are understood and jointly owned.

SPMG meetings are usually held termly with and and the range of officers described above. The first meeting establishes the areas of concern, provides the opportunity for the LA to appropriately challenge the school around its performance but most importantly, to identify what support the school needs to improve, either from the Local Authority and/or from GwE. Subsequent meetings focus on the effectiveness of that support and review the progress being made. Once a school is determined to have made sufficient progress it is removed from the SPMG. If there is a concern that insufficient progress is being made, then the local authority will use its statutory powers under the Act. Such is the effectiveness of this process that the numbers of schools coming under the remit of the SPMG has diminished over time as early identification and intervention by the LA & GwE has been successful in reducing the number of schools causing concern or being placed in an Estyn category.

Where schools have not made suitable progress, and this can be for a variety of reasons, this is escalated to the Local Quality Board for discussion and determination of next steps. The Local Quality Board comprises of

, who is also and . Information is presented to the Board from and on individual school performance, the impact of support provided and the ongoing areas for concern. The Quality Board then makes a decision whether to move into statutory processes and the issuing of a Pre-Warning Notice or full Warning Notice. This decision is then communicated to the school, usually via the next SPMG meeting. Where Warning Notices have failed to secure the necessary improvement or where a school has been placed in the most serious statutory category of follow up i.e. Special Measures, the Council has followed appropriate procedures with Welsh Government Ministers and replaced a school's governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) for a period of time. The success of this approach in Flintshire is demonstrated by the fact that these IEBs were then transitioned successfully back to a governing body and the schools in question maintained their improvement journey independently.

These school improvement and intervention processes were reviewed as part of the Council's Local Government Education Services (LGES) inspection of 2019 and were found to be effective. The following comments are included in the Council's report:

The local authority's arrangements for identifying schools and non-maintained settings causing concern work well, and in most cases lead to effective actions. The working relationships between the local authority and its regional consortium are good and effective.

Officers and elected members in Flintshire know their schools and settings well and can outline clearly the relative strengths and areas for improvement. They recognise specific issues facing individual schools causing concern and act in a timely way to put in place the most appropriate support in collaboration with GwE. Where appropriate, local authority officers raise matters of concern with their counterparts in GwE, and these issues are resolved quickly, generally resulting in more effective support.

The local authority regularly considers the progress of schools causing concern at a suitable range of management boards. These enable useful exchanges of evidence regarding the full range of issues facing these schools and settings. As a result, at a strategic level elected members and officers are able to consider overarching improvements in the round and to make informed decisions regarding progress in these schools. The local authority has used its powers effectively in the very few schools where progress has been too slow.

Since 2019 these processes have been regularly reviewed by Estyn through their termly Local Area Link Inspector (LALI) visits to the Council and also reflected in the Annual Joint Assurance and Risk Assessment Report authored by Audit Wales, Care Standards Inspectorate Wales and Estyn. Confidence in the Council's approach to managing schools causing concern has been maintained and this is reflected in the 2023 report which states:

Flintshire local authority has ambitious aspirations for all its children and young people. The local authority knows its schools well and provides effective challenge and support for them....Overall positive inspection outcomes, only a very few schools in follow up.

The well-established and effective processes around schools causing concern in Flintshire provided the basis of a regional model which has been embedded across the six North Wales authorities. This was widely consulted upon with schools and is enshrined in the Local Authority's Partnership Agreement which has been adopted by all Flintshire schools, including St David's High School.

It is worth noting that over the last ten years, no school except St David's High School has ever challenged the local authority either on its decision to intervene or on the processes undertaken.

All other Headteachers and Chairs of Governors have engaged effectively with the local authority and GwE and at the end of the intervention process have acknowledged the positive impact of the journey of support and intervention on their schools and the professional way the process was managed by the local authority.

The local authority takes cognisance of the statutory guidance in relation to schools causing concern and the Welsh Government (WG) template letter within it when issuing Warning Notices but has found that adopting a broader communication style has proven to be more effective in achieving positive outcomes for schools in this situation. The success of this approach is reflected in the number of schools being removed from our SPMG processes over time, as acknowledged by Estyn, and the low numbers of schools in follow up categories. This approach has also been reinforced by feedback from other headteachers involved in SPMG, who confirmed they were appropriately challenging, hugely supportive and humanely managed. The Warning Notice issued to St David's contained the main features of the WG template, referenced positive actions undertaken by the school and, we maintain, is professional and empathic, even when delivering a difficult message. The Warning Notice was not sent to the school 'cold'. It had been verbally shared and discussed at length with the school as part of the SPMG meeting of January 2023 which lasted three hours in total. This is a consistent approach we take with all schools as we consider it to be good practice to invest the time in these critical discussions.

The template references the need to produce a detailed plan but again, the local authority believes that by applying greater flexibility in identifying actions, timescales and plans than those outlined in the WG document, this has resulted in successful outcomes. St David's already had a detailed plan in place because they had been identified as a school causing concern under the LA/Regional process. This discussion had already been had with the school and accepted by them at the time. It is disingenuous for the school to now say that they did not ever want the plan. The 360° plan, jointly developed between the local authority, GwE and the school, clearly identified the areas of

concern that needed improvement, the actions to be taken and the resources being deployed to support it. There was no need to produce a separate plan and place this additional workload burden on the school or create unnecessary duplication. The 360° plan is regularly reviewed by GwE and local authority officers in their regular contact with the school and progress shared more formally via the SPMG meetings. Because of this structured and proven approach, supported by regular contact via the SIA, the local authority did not consider it necessary or reasonable for the school to be reporting on progress on a weekly basis as outlined in the template. Many of the improvement activities identified in the plan needed time to embed and have a sustained impact, so weekly reporting was not appropriate and would have placed an additional burden on a school which was already stretched to capacity.

It is important to note that St David's High School had already been subject to the SPMG process following its core inspection in 2016 until its removal from the statutory category of 'In Need of Significant Improvement' in 2018. However, by early 2020 it was clear to the local authority and GwE that the number of risk factors at the school which included concerns about the consistency of quality teaching and assessment, pupil outcomes, attendance and exclusions, financial deficit, staffing challenges and very low pupil numbers meant that the school was formally identified as a 'school causing concern'. The school had been categorised as Amber for the third consecutive year in terms of performance and a Category C for capacity to improve. An SPMG meeting was held with the school on 12th March 2020 where the reasons for concern were scoped out with them. **See Appendix 1a.** However, the minutes of that meeting were not issued as a few days later the pandemic was declared, statutory education ceased, and everyone's focus switched to managing the COVID-19 pandemic and its specific impacts on all of our schools.

The assertion by the school that written evidence related to areas of concern were not shared with them is incorrect. Short action notes from meetings were shared and included in agendas for future meetings as a reference point. The local authority had moved away from taking copious notes at SPMG meetings as they had not proven to be impactful and were demanding on the limited resources within the small local authority team. At the start of any SPMG process with a school, including St David's, it was confirmed that only short summary action notes would be taken. No school had ever objected to that approach and the system had worked well because there was an understanding that everyone around the table was a committed education professional and could take responsibility for their specific contribution to the ongoing improvement actions. This process has been positively acknowledged by Estyn. The focus of the SPMG meetings were to check in on progress and to consider any other support necessary and discussions from the SPMG would be followed up by the SIA on their regular visits to school in between the meetings. This is captured in the notes of school visits by the SIA and updates on the 360° plan. It is worth noting that St David's did not take issue with this approach until the Warning Notice was issued.

I

In response to the school's claim that the local authority did not share the PowerPoint used by in the meeting of the SPMG in January 2023, we assert that this is not correct.

offered to share the PowerPoint with members of the panel, but chose not to send it to the LA and shared a set of notes/ comments instead. These were distributed to the SPMG panel as a separate document. It is also disingenuous for it to be implied that notes from the SPMG were only provided because requested them to be. The meeting was held on the 17th January 2023 and the request for them

from _____ was received on the 20th January – only three days after the meeting. It was just a case that competing workload demands on _____ had not yet resulted in their completion and issuing.

The examples of actions agreed in SPMG meetings clearly reflected the areas of concern discussed by everyone who was present. By way of explanation for Welsh Ministers, please see below:

*Recommendations [from] the Estyn inspection report 2016; VB advised SR to ensure narrative shows progress around self-evaluation and impact since 2016. SR advised consistent pace of improvement not yet happening within all departments and action to improve this will include the Literacy, Numeracy and DCF Coordinators quality assuring schemes of work. **These comments are linked to concerns identified around quality of teaching and learning.***

*Intervention Fund; Action: SR to submit business case asap for grant to support the NEST provision. **These comments are linked to discussions around behaviour management and the number of exclusions.***

*Welsh: SR advised key need to recruit teacher of Welsh. Action: VB to liaise with RR to explore network of Welsh teachers. **These comments are linked to the discussions around a shortfall in the teaching capacity in a core subject.***

*Transition arrangements: Action SR exploring further working with KS3 colleagues and to provide to LA projected costs for transition support. **These are linked to discussions related to the concern around low pupil transfer numbers from one local primary school in particular – LA provided additional funding to support the release of two staff to work with local primary schools to boost parental confidence in the SDHS offer and hopefully increase Year 7 numbers.***

*Governance: Action: CoG to consider use of the Governor Cymru toolkit for governor self-evaluation. **This action related to discussions around the skills of the governing body and its capacity to effectively evaluate the work of the school, its standards of performance and be able to hold senior managers to account.***

_____ and _____ were active participants in those discussions during the meetings, so it is worrying therefore, they now appear to be so dependent on the need for a detailed written record. It is the local authority's view that the school seems to be focusing too much on the management of the SPMG meetings and 'picking holes' in the process to deflect attention away from why there was an ongoing need for considerable support for the school by the local authority and GwE and a lack of acceptance that they are a school about which there are significant and legitimate concerns. Copies of agendas from March 2020 to January 2023 are attached at **Appendix 1b.**

Appendix 2 outlines the range of evidence that the local authority and GwE have used to identify St David's High School as a school causing concern and subsequently issue a Warning Notice. It includes quantitative data from AWCDS 2018 – 2019 and detailed notes taken from GwE reports of visits and evaluation activities which highlight strengths and weaknesses identified in the school over the last two years. These notes are considerable, so for ease of reference, items highlighted in blue text are the basis for the concerns about consistency and progress. The local authority believes that this information more than satisfies your request for the evidence used to reach a decision for issuing a Warning Notice.

Appendix 3 is a copy of the 360° support plan which the school agreed to in June 2022 when SPMG processes restarted after the pandemic. It is disingenuous for the school to now say they never wanted the support, and it is of considerable worry that the school are convinced that they do not need the support with the range of concerns identified within the school.

Appendix 4 is a copy of the GwE March 2022 evaluation report referenced in the Warning Notice. This report was discussed at length in an informal online meeting with [redacted] and [redacted] on 16th March 2022. The meeting had been called because of the school's concerns about comments made by [redacted] to LA officers and the SIA in the regular termly meeting which had taken place the day after an Estyn Thematic meeting at the school on 8th March 2022. [redacted] had specifically requested if the LA considered St David's High School a 'school causing concern' and indicated that comments [redacted] had received from [redacted] on the thematic visit had suggested there were things to be concerned about. These comments had been fed back to [redacted] by the SIA. At that meeting on 16th March 2022, [redacted] and [redacted] also discussed concerns they had about the [redacted].

[redacted]. During that meeting myself and [redacted] referenced the GwE 360° Evaluation report, which we had recently received a copy of, and expressed our professional view that many aspects of the report were reflective of Estyn reports of schools which had been placed in Special Measures. We reiterated the need to focus on the recommendations in the recent GwE report and the 360° support plan. The meeting was not an SPMG meeting – it was an impromptu get together online to discuss the issues at the time, so a written record was not kept. You will note that this issue of [redacted] comments is referenced in correspondence between the school and the LA.

To support our response to the complaint we attach a number of other appendices:

Appendix 5 – Original Warning Notice Letter to SDHS 17.1.23

Appendix 6 – School response to the Warning Notice 3.2.23

Appendix 7 - LA Response to School 16.2.03

Appendix 8 – LA Response to School's Letter to the SPMG 27.3.23 (we presume you have already received a copy of the school's letter to SPMG as part of their complaint bundle)

Appendix 9 – LA Letter requesting confirmation that the Warning Notice has been fully shared with Governing Body.

This letter at Appendix 9 is of particular importance because we believed, from intelligence we had gathered, that [redacted] and [redacted] had not shared the Warning Notice with the full Governing Body.

The Warning Notice letter of 17th January 2023 whilst appropriately addressed to [redacted], specifically advised her that the Warning Notice needed to be shared with the Governing Body and that a formal response should be received from the Governing Body. The legislation itself references the Warning Notice being to the Governing Body. You will see the subsequent responses from the school to the Warning Notice did not provide this reassurance, hence the need for us write to [redacted] specifically on this matter. The most recent response from [redacted], attached at **Appendix 10**, has confirmed our concerns and demonstrates a breach of the school

governance regulations. A Warning Notice cannot be dealt with by _____ under their 'emergency powers' as referenced in _____ reply. Section 40 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005 clearly outlines where delegation of function to _____ is permitted:

40.—(1) The chair may, where in his or her opinion the circumstances mentioned in paragraph (2) apply, exercise any function of the governing body which can be delegated under regulation 50(1).

(2) The circumstances are that a delay in exercising the function would be likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of—

(a) the school;

(b) any pupil at the school, or his or her parent; or

(c) a person who works at the school.

(3) In paragraph (2), "delay" ("oedi") means delay for a period extending beyond the earliest date on which it would be reasonably practicable for a meeting of the governing body, or of a committee to which the function in question has been delegated, to be held.

Although _____ had determined to apply a decision under emergency powers, there is no evidence of compliance with the requirement to bring that decision to the attention of the governing body for approval as soon as possible, giving five working days' notice to convene a meeting.

Furthermore, it is our contention that this matter cannot be dealt with by the committee which is referenced in _____ response. Whilst committees of a Governing Body must be constituted in accordance with their terms of reference and membership, as approved annually by the Governing Body, it remains those actions arising from a Warning Notice cannot be delegated to a committee. We have not been provided with the terms of reference of that committee or governing body minutes showing when it was approved. We consider this to be a very serious breach of the school governance regulations and demonstrates that _____

_____ This supports the LA's view that a Warning Notice is an appropriate course of action. For completeness, a copy of the LA's response to _____ on this very serious matter is included at **Appendix 11**.

Regarding the assertion by the school that there are no concerns about its attendance data and that it should not have featured in the Warning Notice, the local authority disagrees. **Appendix 12** is a summary report of the data sourced from the central database and an explanatory commentary. The local authority had clearly referenced the issue of attendance and exclusions as some of the issues to be addressed through the 360° support plan. Such was the concern that the senior leadership team did not appear to have effective systems in place to manage these issues,

_____ has physically based for two days a week in the school to provide coaching and help the SMT establish a more robust approach. No other school in Flintshire has required this level of support. Below is the extract from the 360° plan referencing this work.

Inspection area 2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Provide further support for pupils' wellbeing and attitude to learning by increasing attendance rates and further reducing fixed term exclusions (2.2)

Actions agreed with the school then included

- Review of school attendance protocols
- Support school with interviews where pupil behaviour is placing them at risk of permanent exclusion

- Work progressively to examine and address the school attendance systems
- Support to construct regular letter to parents with Attendance highlighted.
- Attend staff meetings to discuss attendance
- Support school with school assembly once process is embedded.
- Support for disengaged learners – The Bridge Project

The local authority does not fully agree with the school's comments in its complaint letter that 'the current leadership team were instrumental in driving the school improvement that satisfied Estyn to remove the school out of the statutory category of 'In Need of Significant Improvement' in June 2018. The school were fortunate to have appointed [redacted] just before their inspection in 2016. The Estyn report notes that in a short time [redacted] had *"communicated successfully his vision for the school and gained the confidence of staff, pupils, parents and governors. His strategic direction for the school has been expressed clearly and appropriately and key priorities have been identified"*. It is the local authority's view that [redacted] was the driving force behind the pace of improvement which resulted in the school being removed from the statutory category in 2018. Whilst the monitoring report does identify a number of improvements in leadership, there were still key aspects related to senior and middle leadership that required improvement.

It is the local authority's position that a number of the shortcomings identified in the original core inspection and in the monitoring report of 2018 are still evident today. These reports can be accessed on the Estyn website www.estyn.gov.wales .

Since the issuing of the Warning Notice in January 2023, there have been a number of other serious matters related to St David's High School which reinforces the local authority's view that leadership and governance is not effective and that there is either a lack of knowledge of legislation or a disregard for it. We feel it is important that we bring these to your attention.

A second recent issue relates to a communication sent to parents advising them of changes to session times linked to the forthcoming examination series, which raises another concern about the

quality of leadership and management at the school. It was brought to the LA's attention on the 24th April 2023 that St David's High School had written, that week, to parents to inform them that they were changing the lunchtime (and therefore end of session 1 and start of session 2) with effect from week beginning the 2nd May. The letter was sent from . The contacted to ascertain if the school were aware of the relevant regulations in relation to the changing of school session times. explained the main elements of the legislation and it became clear that the school had not met the key requirements in the following areas for the change to be brought about, i.e:

1. This had not been a Governing Body led process
2. No consultation had taken place with LA or other stakeholders
3. If the governing body had determined to implement the proposed change (with or without modification), it must, not less than six weeks before any change in those times is to take effect: inform the LA of the change and of when it is to take effect, but no notice was given to the LA by the school.
4. A change in the times of a school session must only be made so as to take effect:
 - where it affects the start or end of the school day, at the beginning of a school year
 - **in all other cases, at the beginning of a school term.** The school's proposal was to start during a school term and with only a few days' notice to stakeholders.

In conclusion, the local authority maintains its view that St David's High School is in a position of considerable difficulty, and has been for many years, which poses risks to the quality of education being provided to learners over an extended period. It maintains that there is sufficient evidence, both longstanding and more recent, of concerns about the school's performance, leadership and governance which supports the issuing of a Warning Notice. The local authority believes that the evidence it has provided to Welsh Government Ministers clearly demonstrates that there are systemic issues at the school, and it is our position that we do not have confidence in the current leadership and governing body that these serious matters can be effectively addressed without statutory intervention.

We look forward to receiving your adjudication on this matter.

Yours sincerely

List of Appendices - Council Response to WG regarding complaint

1a	Initial Invitation to SPMG
1b	SPMG Agendas & Action Notes
2	Supporting Evidence on SDHS Performance
3	360° Support Plan
4	GwE Evaluation Report March 2022
5	Warning Notice 17.1.23
6	Response to Warning Notice 3. 2.23
7	LA Response to CoG 16.2.23
8	LA Response to School Letter to SPMG 27.3.23
9	LA Request for Governance Documentation 24.4.23
10	Letter to 28.4.23
11	LA Response re Governance & Warning Notice 8.5.23
12	Attendance Data
13	Pupil Admissions Issue

St David's High School,
St David's Terrace,
Saltney,
CH4 OAE

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 13th February 2020

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

School Performance Monitoring Meeting Thursday 12th March 2020 8.30am –10am

I am writing to invite St David's High School Saltney to attend a meeting of the School Performance Monitoring Group. The Local Authority has a statutory role in monitoring the quality of educational provision and standards of performance in all schools and uses this group to challenge schools where there is a cause for concern. The group also ensures that schools are receiving appropriate levels of support from both the Local Authority and the Regional School Improvement Service, GwE, to support them on their journey of improvement.

St David's High School has been identified as such a school after being placed in the Amber category of support for the third year as well as remaining at C for improvement capacity.

The meeting will take place on Thursday 12th March 2020 at 8.30am in the Video Conference Room at County Hall. The focus of the meeting will be for the school to report on progress against its school improvement plan. You are welcome to bring any documentation that will support you in this task although a formal presentation is not expected. These meetings aim to take the form of a constructive dialogue between school leaders and the LA and GwE.

The membership of the group is usually myself and up to two members of the Education & Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee. and have also been invited. It is expected that will attend the meeting as well so that the role of the governing body in supporting the school but also holding it to account can be explored.

It is a requirement of the Local Authority that once a school is brought under the scrutiny of the School Performance Monitoring Group, the governing body is formally advised and the reasons for this intervention shared. and should then provide regular updates to the governing body on the outcomes of these meetings and the action/support agreed.

I would be grateful if you could confirm your attendance and that of to at the earliest opportunity. I look forward to seeing you on the 12th March.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.siryfflint.gov.uk



Yours sincerely,

Appendix 1b – Copies of SPMG Agendas & Action Notes March 2020 – Jan 2023

Agenda

School Performance Monitoring Group

Thursday March 12th 2020

Video Conference Room

8.30am – 10.00am

St David's High School, Saltney

1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of the meeting
2. School Improvement priorities – school report on progress
3. School Categorisation– support from LA and GwE
4. Update from Governors
5. School Budget / Licensed Deficit Plan
6. Actions agreed

Agenda

School Performance Monitoring Group

Monday 9th May 2022*

(Note for WG - *process restarted after the pandemic)

MS Teams

2pm

St David's High School, Saltney

1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of the meeting
2. School Improvement priorities – school to update
3. Support from LA and GwE (360 plan)
4. Update from Governors
5. Actions agreed

Agenda

School Performance Monitoring Group

Monday 18th July 2022

MS Teams

3.00 – 5.00pm

Ysgol

1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of the meeting
2. School improvement priorities
3. Support from LA and GwE - 360 plan
4. Update from Governing Body
5. School Finance
6. Actions agreed

Action points summary from last meeting (9th May 2022)

- I. GwE support 360 Plan: **Action:** to provide with priority subject for a GwE team support workshop
- II. Recommendations for the Estyn inspection report 2016; advised to ensure narrative shows progress around self-evaluation and impact since 2016. advised consistent pace of improvement not yet happening within all departments and action to improve this will include the Literacy, Numeracy and DCF Coordinators quality assuring schemes of work. **Action: Update at next meeting**
- III. Attendance of learners at Catch up sessions equivalent to 2 days lessons per week now been sustained for 25 weeks. acknowledged commitment of staff and advised school to ensure quality of teaching during the day was not impacted. **Action: Update at next meeting**
- IV. Intervention Fund; **Action** to submit business case asap for grant to support the NEST provision
- V. Staff recruitment and retention: advised school was not in a financial position to offer salary enhancements and retention and recruitment a risk
- VI.
- VII. Welsh: advised key need to recruit teacher of Welsh. **Action:** to liaise with to explore network of welsh teachers. **Action;** to check if 360 plan includes access to a Welsh speaker - curriculum review found not needed;
- VIII. Transition arrangements: **Action** exploring further working with KS3 colleagues and to provide to projected costs for transition support

Completed

- IX. ALN: **Action** to provide financial business case for admin support for ALN - to use ALN funding
- X. Governance: **Action:** to consider use of the Governor Cymru toolkit for governor self-evaluation
- XI. 360 Plan **Action:** to finalise plan

Agenda

School Performance Monitoring Group

Tuesday 17th January 2023
MS Teams

3.30 – 5pm

St David's High School, Saltney

1. Welcome, introductions and action from last meeting (18.07.22)
2. School improvement priorities – school to update on impact on pupil progress and outcomes since last meeting
3. Support from LA and GwE - 360 plan update
4. Update from Governing Body
5. Actions agreed and date of next meeting

Action points summary from last meeting

- XII. Literacy, Numeracy and DCF Coordinators to quality assure schemes of work.
- XIII. School to submit business for intervention grant funding to support the NEST provision
- XIV. School to update on progress in recruiting a teacher of Cymraeg / solutions to address gap in curriculum timetable.
- XV. GwE to update 360 plan to include bespoke support for Cymraeg and update at next meeting.
- XVI. School to update on impact of LA funded transition arrangements at next meeting.
- XVII. to consider use of the Governor Cymru toolkit for governor self-evaluation.

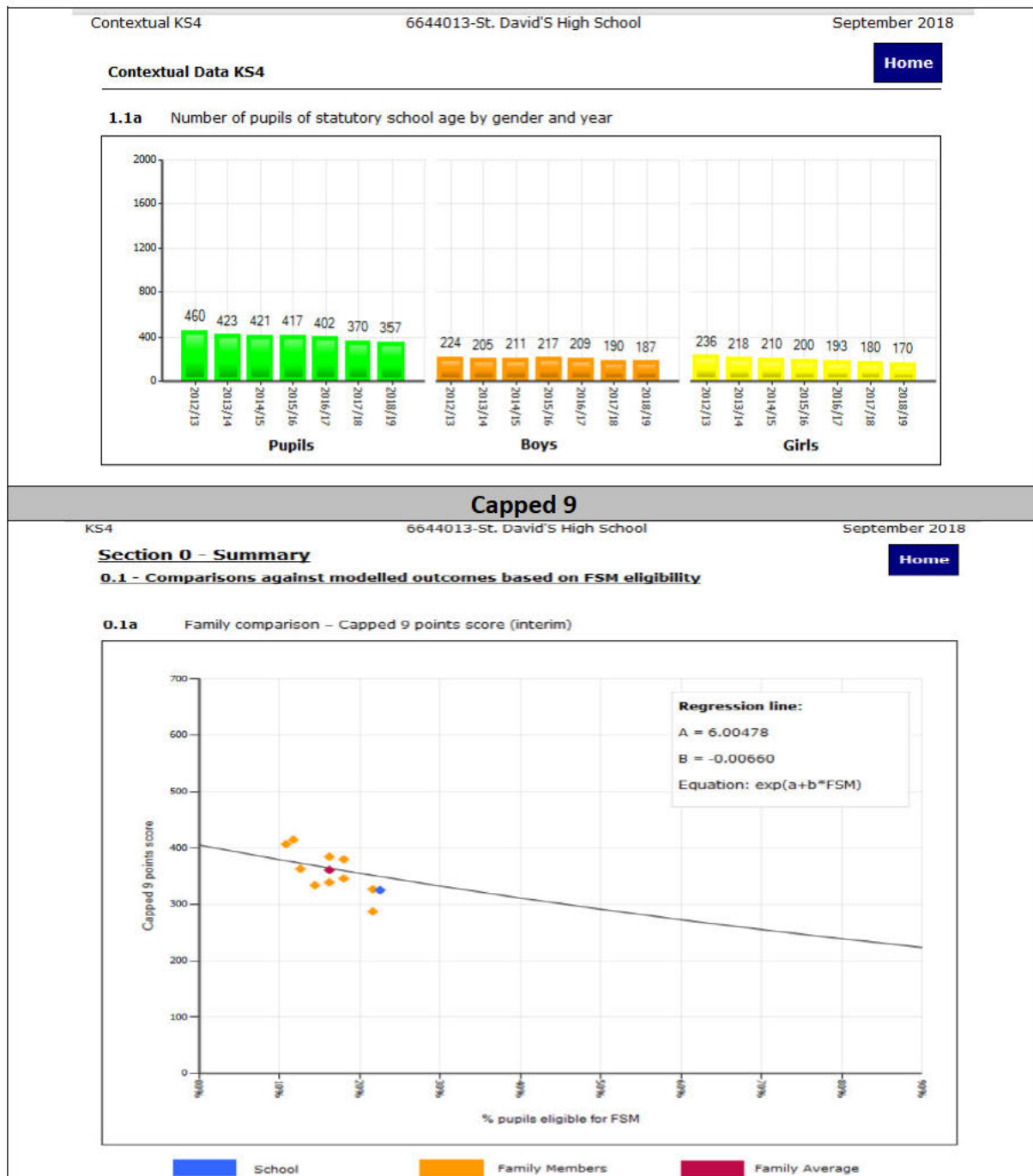
XVIII. School to finalise School Improvement Plan for 2022 -2023 for approval by Governing Body.

Next meeting was scheduled for Monday 27th March 2023 at 3pm; however school declined to attend so meeting postponed.

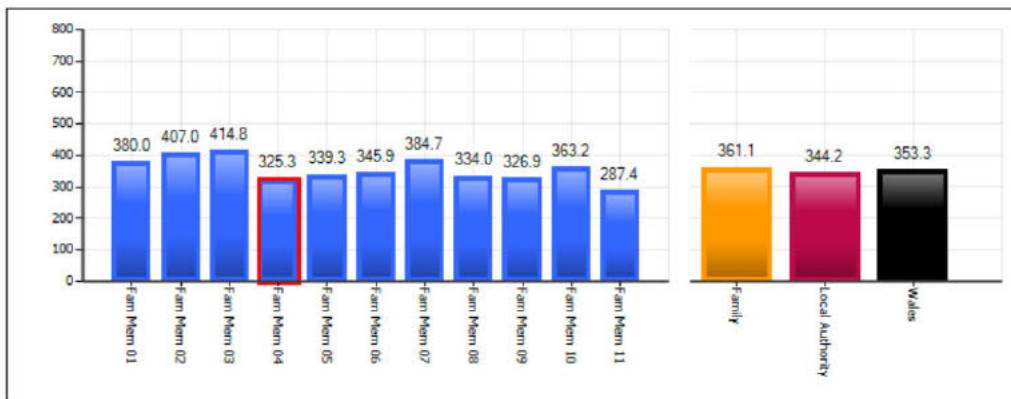
APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION TO SUPPORT FLINTSHIRE LA WITH RESPONSE TO WG REQUEST RE: StDHS

The following are extracts from the AWCDS from 2018-2019. They highlight the variable nature of performance and trajectory overtime prior to the pandemic:



1.1b Family comparison



WELSH BAC SKILLS CHALLENGE

KS4

6644013-St. David's High School

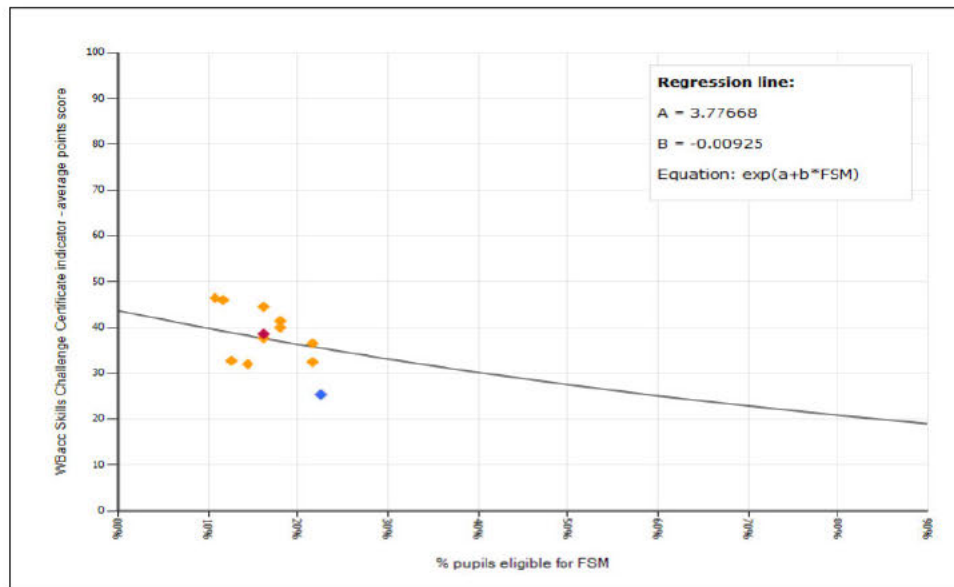
September 2018

Section 0 - Summary

[Home](#)

0.1 - Comparisons against modelled outcomes based on FSM eligibility

0.1b Family comparison - WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator - average points score



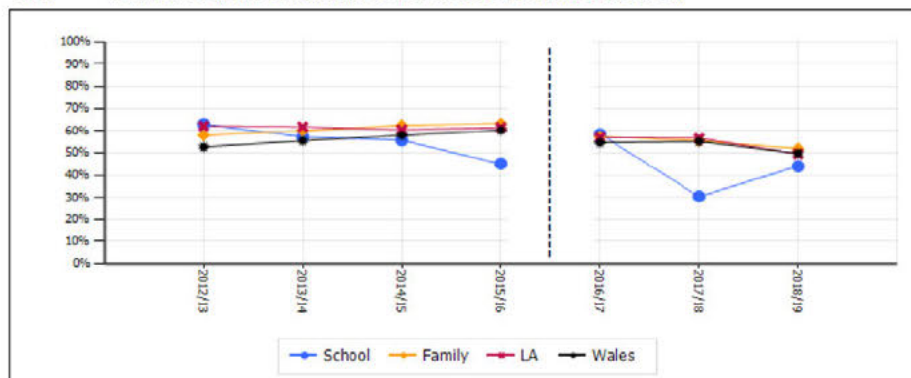
LEVEL 2+

Section 1 - Key Indicators

[Home](#)

L2 inc E/W & M (exc literature)

1.7a % of Year 11 pupils achieving (% 15 year olds for data prior to 2015/16)

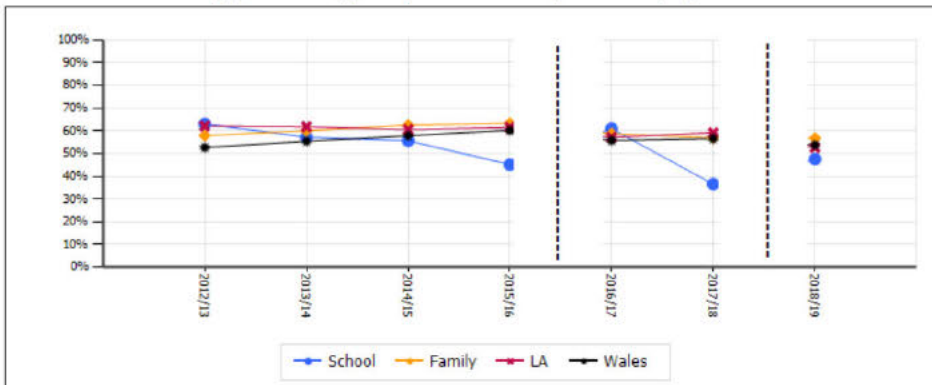


Section 1 - Key Indicators

[Home](#)

L2 inc E/W & M (inc literature)

1.8a % of Year 11 pupils achieving (% 15 year olds for data prior to 2015/16)



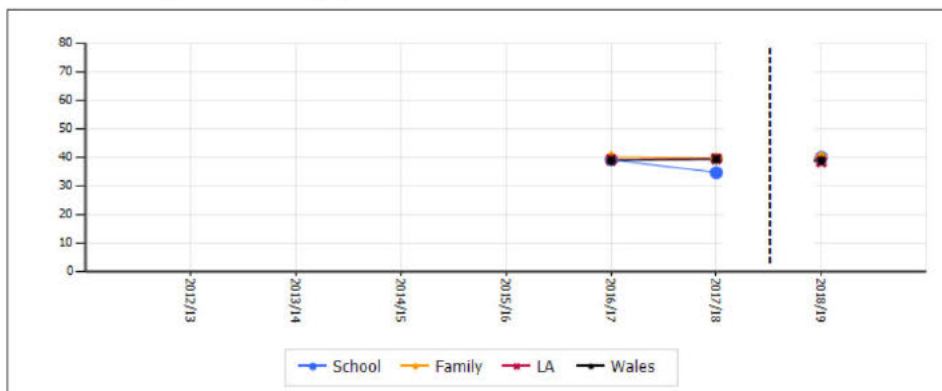
LITERACY

Section 1 - Key Indicators

[Home](#)

Literacy indicator – average points score

1.3a Literacy indicator – average points score



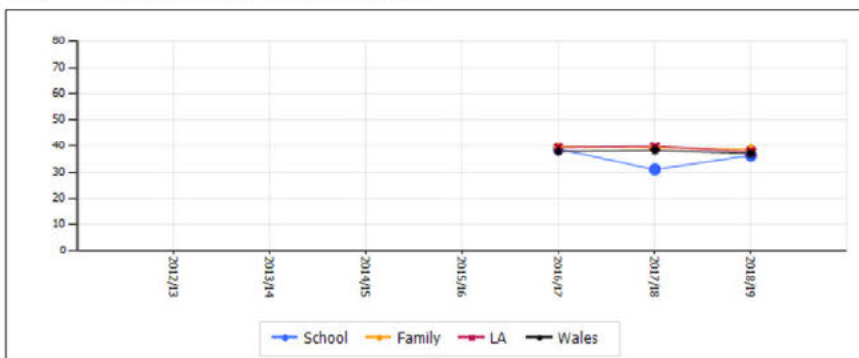
NUMERACY

Section 1 - Key Indicators

[Home](#)

Numeracy indicator – average points score

1.4a Numeracy indicator – average points score



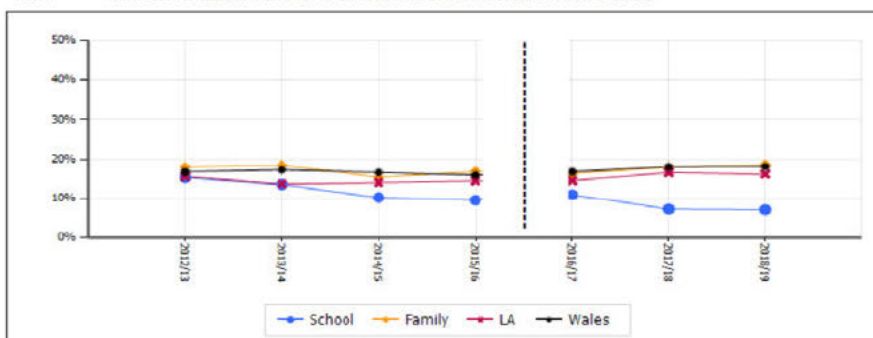
5A*-A

Section 1 - Key Indicators

[Home](#)

5+ A*-A or equivalent

1.6a % of Year 11 pupils achieving (% 15 year olds for data prior to 2015/16)



Contextual KS4

6644013-St. David'S High School

September 2018

[Home](#)

Contextual Data KS4

1.3c % Year 11 pupils achieving

Title	School					LA	Wales
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2018/19	2018/19
Capped 9 Points Score (interim)					325.3	344.2	353.3
WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator - points score			20.0	20.6	25.4	33.1	36.4
Literacy indicator - points score			39.3	34.7	40.2	38.5	39.0
Numeracy indicator - points score			38.7	31.3	36.4	37.7	37.1
Science indicator - points score			38.9	30.0	34.6	37.7	36.8
5+ A*-A or equivalent	10.2	9.6	11.0	7.3	7.1	16.2	16.1
L2 inc E/W & M (exc literature)	55.7	45.2	58.5	30.5	44.0	49.6	49.9
L2 inc E/W & M (inc literature)	55.7	45.2	61.0	36.6	47.6	52.7	53.8
L1	93.2	97.3	96.3	82.9	96.4	93.3	92.7

KS4

6644013-St. David'S High School

September 2018

Section 8 - Value Added (Model 2a)

[Home](#)

Trends by key indicator

8.2a KS2 - KS4

Value Added KS2-KS4 : All Values

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
01. Capped 9 Points score (interim)							
02. WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate - points score							
03. Literacy indicator							
04. Numeracy indicator							
05. Science indicator							
06. L2 inc E/W & M (exc literature)	8.2	4.0	3.8	-10.0	6.9	-15.5	
07. L2 inc E/W & M (inc literature)							
08. Level 1	-0.4	0.7	0.3	-1.1	-1.1		

The following are extracts from GwE reports that highlight the strengths and weaknesses identified in St David's High School over the past two years. Items highlighted in blue are the basis for concerns about consistency and progress:

360 Evaluation of Teaching and Learning, March 2022

Overall Conclusions

The school has important growth points on which to build towards the aim of consistently good teaching. These strengths and areas for development are included in the report below. 17 lessons were visited over a five-day period 28 February to 4 March 2022. Expected or better progress was seen in just over half of lessons with strong progress in a few (strengths in English, humanities and art. Some concerns about Welsh, MFL and Music shared and discussed.) Some progress was seen in nearly all lessons. Linked and sequenced teaching and learning development priorities have already been identified by the school and these will be finalised before the end of March. The classroom impact of work on these priorities will further develop provision, standards and overall teaching profile. This impact will be important ahead of an Estyn visit as standards in the current small Year 11 are lower than last year.

Skills

The mapping of cross-curricular opportunities for learners to develop and use their skills in a meaningful context has begun. This is led by the coordinators who will work to support consistency of subject approach.

- *Oracy – The majority of learners listen to teachers and peers but often passively. The use of subject specific vocabulary is developing. Pupils will contribute when asked but supporting learners to provide extended oral responses remains an important area for development. This is closely linked to the need to further develop the quality of teacher questioning. Little group work was seen (impact of pandemic?) but opportunities for paired work are missed.*
- *Writing – The planned whole book scrutiny is needed to fully evaluate the range of writing skills. There is, however, a clear need to focus on the basic writing skills of less able learners. Scaffolding for these learners was observed in some lessons but not a consistent whole school strategy. Some extended writing opportunities were seen, (English and humanities) but this is an area for development.*
- *Reading – important whole school provision is now in place to improve arrangements for identifying, supporting and monitoring pupils with weaker reading skills including the use of Reading+. The impact of interventions should be closely monitored. Ensuring that the reading age data is used by teachers to support planning will be important. There is a need to continue to develop classroom reading strategies across the school. Opportunities for higher order reading skills need further development.*
- *Welsh Language – little seen across the curriculum and an area for development.*

Priorities

The next step is to continue to work towards consistently good teaching by focusing initially on a few well sequenced and linked priorities from the 360 evaluation. Giving initiatives time to embed, evaluating their impact on learning and building on existing strengths will also be important. Success will further increase the proportion of lessons delivering good and strong progress. Subject leaders will play a key role. They are getting to know the quality of provision

in their areas and developing their teams. The school is now well placed to respond with an updated teaching and learning plan. The GwE team can support this. Suggested initial priorities emerging from this review would be:

1. Review lesson objectives with a view to developing wider use of differentiated learner outcomes. Appropriate challenge and support will key themes. Personalised learning will be an important lens through which to view the development of all aspects of teaching.
2. Build on the start of lesson routines already established.
3. Develop questioning – central to deeper learner understanding, effective Assessment for Learning and encouraging extended oral responses.
4. Keep developing classroom provision for skills starting with a focus on oracy (speaking and listening). This is a good foundation for reading and writing and links well with the other early priorities.
5. Improved literacy is the key to curriculum access for your less able (and often socially disadvantaged) learners. The school will need to continue work on agreed whole school strategies for developing writing, reading, numeracy and Welsh.
6. Develop learner independence – CfW is a vehicle for this.

On 24 March 2022 a whole schoolwork scrutiny took place as part of the 360 review. As part of the alliance teaching and learning focus, were part of the review and focused their scrutiny on the LLC books. Within the time constraints Louise Thomas (LT) from GwE focused on literacy across Humanities, Health and Wellbeing and Expressive Arts

Quality of pupil work

In most of the books seen the quality of work produced by the pupils was to a good standard. However, in some of the lower end KS3 Humanities books there were repeated errors in terms of written accuracy. While pupils had responded to these following the school's policy of the use of the purple pen, it was evident that the same mistake was being made in consecutive pieces of work.

The level of challenge was not always evidence with some repetition of tasks across the year groups (7-9 Geography) which may suggest that some tasks are not currently developing pupils' skills, they are focused on knowledge/content.

The writing skills of Year 7 learners could be an area of focus, particularly the lower ability learners. For these learners, writing is often brief and therefore lacks development opportunities. This could be an area of focus as it would allow for pupil progress to be seen more clearly as well as dips in understanding and retention of knowledge.

Some books showed evidence of self-assessment, however few books showed examples of peer assessment, this was the case across the AOEs.

All of the books showed evidence of following the literacy marking policy, and most allowed the pupils to engage with pupils and are given time to correct the spelling by repeating the work 3 times. However as noted previously the same errors were being reported across units of work and so the impact of this techniques needs to be monitored.

Quality of marking:

While there was evidence of regular teacher marking across the whole sample the quality of feedback was not consistent across the AOLEs monitored. There is lots of evidence of 'tick and flick' marking. Is this school policy? Would it be more effective to use classroom discussion, questioning and verbal feedback to establish pupil's understanding and progress and then allow for more in-depth marking of key pieces?

Planning for literacy

The literacy policy for marking the books was followed by AOLEs. However, the only code that was used consistently was SP. There are approx. 10 (this may need to be clarified) codes on the literacy marking policy and many are rarely used. This could be due to staff confidence e.g. They are not confident in recognising when a grammatical construction is incorrect, or it could be due to work load and marking pressure. It would be advisable to audit the use of these in more depth.

There was limited evidence of reading opportunities in the books, but this may be something that is being developed in lessons, without the need to 'document' in books. There may be some opportunity for some CPD on guided reading tasks that could enhance pupil's engagement with reading across the AOLEs.

Some books across the AOLEs showed evidence of work on tier 2/3 vocabulary. However, there was little evidence of the vocabulary being taught explicitly – opportunity for retrieval tasks or whole school approaches such as the Frayer Model.

Book review was conducted by _____ on 24/3/22

In some subjects e.g., Science, there is a clear imperative to use Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary which both do to a high level (great!); the same for English where there is a clear expectation to know and deploy technical vocabulary correctly. Tasks were more limited in other subjects and quality would at times be improved by more effective scaffolding.

Challenge: tasks in Science/English/Geography for the more able students were pitched to stretch them – great to see – and produced some really good work. Tasks in some areas not as challenging;

Areas for development

- *Feedback. Would it help for the school to look at objective setting? This would focus assessment on specific criteria and help formulate feedback follow up (SITs) effectively. Maybe aim for fewer tasks, focussed feedback and more dedicated time for improvement work. I think we can support the school with training here.*
- *Focussed work needed around literacy and the joint responsibilities and approaches of all. Again, I think this is something we can support – and there is some good practice in school to be used.*

- *Challenge – to be addressed in some subjects. It was variable and the pupils need to experience challenge more broadly.*
- *QA – current sheet is too focussed on compliance and needs to look at progress/ feedback/ skills – and not much else!*

Note of Visit 13.9.22

are working on the plan. Main areas will include:

- *Ensuring lessons provide all learners with appropriate levels of challenge.*
- *Progress in skills*
- *Provision in Welsh*
- *Supporting FSM/ needy learners in social and educational development (focus on attendance/ engagement/ readiness for learning/ attitudes to learning*
- *Trialling of CfW and developing an understanding of progression*
- *Ensuring consistency in the evaluation of standards and progress across the school*
- *Ensuring GB have the right skills to fulfil their statutory duties regarding safeguarding.*

Note of Visit 14.10.22

Main issues

- *Concerns re Welsh (SSIA has visited HT). Some rejigging of classes. Teachers have attended WJEC training. Assessments for Year 11 learners are a priority. Classes have been all moved to Spanish in Years 7-9 too.*

Book Scrutiny 21.11.22

1) Listening to Learners

KS3

Learners said they enjoyed between half and most of their lessons (Welsh and Spanish were mentioned as the least enjoyed)

All felt they had made progress in most subjects. Maths and English were the most commonly mentioned here.

All could find effective examples in their books of where 'subject improvement tasks' had helped them to improve their work.

Most learners felt challenged in lessons. Maths/English/History/ RE were mentioned. Some learners said that RE/ Music were too easy.

Overall learners felt that most lessons were regularly disrupted by poor behaviour. The same groups of learners were causing the disruption. Teachers were using the system for behaviour management; it sometimes worked, it sometimes didn't.

Oracy: learners said that they would be expected to contribute orally in between half and most of their lessons. They felt this would be the case in Maths/ Drama/ Science/ Spanish.

KS4

Learners enjoyed the majority of their lessons. Most felt they had made progress in most of their lessons. Maths/Science/ History/ English/Science were mentioned; *Welsh was mentioned as a subject where this was not the case.*

All said that teacher feedback has helped them to improve their work; all could find appropriate examples of this (Art/ English ('how' questions)/ Biology tests). Purple pen was valued by learners. Learners said it happened in 'most' to 'not many' lessons.

Behaviour was felt to be a problem in some lessons *They said*
some teachers follow policy consistently and some don't.

Challenge: learner responses suggested they felt challenged in between 'half' and 'most' lessons. Maths and English were mentioned as subjects where the level of challenge is consistently high.

Learners also spoke positively about the after-school revision classes and the benefits they could get from those.

Oracy: learners said there was an expectation on them to speak in only a very small number of lessons. For the most part, if they didn't want to offer contributions they wouldn't have to.

2) Book Review

Overall, the level of challenge was felt to be strong in between a majority of and most books (this accords with what learners said too). Overall, the level of challenge in English, maths and Science (with some misgivings around the latter) was felt to be good.

Tasks seen in

Hospitality and Catering and Product Design were both challenging.

The school approach of using 'subject improvement tasks' to support effective formative feedback seems to be embedded in most areas. There were good examples of this seen e.g., in response to a task on the Greenhouse effect (Geography); in Biology, learners were tasked to use Tier 3 vocabulary; the development of poetry analysis skills in English; Art – good examples were seen; Maths, worked examples and extension of learning). *Not all tasks set are appropriate; some need to be more closely focussed on learner action and not simply identifying an area for future improvement. Improvement work is not always acknowledged or revisited, and it would be helpful if this were done to ensure the learner knows their work has improved (or not).*

Books are in general well-organised. Work presented is neat, usually completed and approaches reflect favourably on attitudes to learning.

In some subjects eg RE and History the level of challenge was too low. The approach here felt a little like planning 'lesson by lesson' with learners not developing extended learning or writing. In history there was insufficient feedback for learners to make progress.

3) Areas for development

- *Level of challenge felt to be higher than last Spring (a different sample of learners and my thoughts only - the school's own findings from the full exercise will tell them more). In some subjects it could be higher (also did not include Welsh/ MfL in this sample this time)*
- *Marking is effective when the school policy is followed, and tasks are set in a challenging fashion (lots of examples of this). In some examples seen there is either insufficient or too infrequent feedback for learners to make good progress.*
- *There are some good examples of extended writing (PD/ Geography amongst others) but overall, there needs to be more, and more examples of scaffolding. With regards to oracy – learners said they were not obliged to contribute to some lessons. We would suggest these are foci of school development moving forward into Curriculum for Wales.*
- *Behaviour: this was a major area of concern, particularly for KS3 learners.*
- *Reviewers felt the school's feedback sheet is overly focussed on compliance and doesn't allow for comment on the quality of work.*

Note of Visit 12.1.23

- *There are a number of staffing absences currently. All are filled with supply teachers. to discuss longer term implications with LA*
- *Discussed approach to SPMG*
- *Support plan: visit to be added. Maybe additional elements after next week (Learning Walks).*
- *Following regional training, is working with middle leaders on linking their plans (FiPs) more tightly around the main aims of the SDP.*
- *Skills: following input on from literacy lead, departments/ teachers will commence work with starter activities.*
- *Follow up from book review has taken place; discussion with one department. Will look at change in the next review.*
- *SPP work with primary cluster to start next week; Alliance work with other high schools to be planned soon.*

2022-23 AUTUMN/SPRING NOTES OF VISITS 17.1.23

The school are broadly pleased with the outcomes for learners in 2022. They have undertaken some (limited) analysis and comparison with 2019 and 2021 while recognising that the nature of information and specifications in these years vary significantly, rendering such comparisons fairly meaningless.

SLT and middle leaders have focussed more closely on internal work, looking at the performance of groups (non-eFsM v eFsM; girls v boys). All middle leaders have used analysis of the 'walled garden' WJEC item- level data to support their understanding of outcomes and to support planning for next year (again, against the backdrop of examination against full specification in 2023 and 'different outcomes' nationally).

Main findings of internal analysis include the following:

- *Outcomes in English and English literature were both pleasing (close to 60% of learners achieving a C or better in both)*
- *Outcomes in maths were sound but the school feel there is room to improve.*

- *Outcomes in Science; not as strong as they have been historically and impacted on by staffing challenges throughout the year. The school are going into 2022-23 in a stronger position.*
- *Outcomes generally in most foundation subjects – Drama, Geography, Music, History and health and social care included - were all good.*
- *Outcomes in Welsh were poor. The school now have no subject specialist teacher in Welsh. Teaching has been allocated to _____ who will be given peer support from two other Flintshire schools. There is also 'catch up' work to be undertaken here as not all planned work in year 10 was completed.*
- *'Walled garden' analysis across the school shows that elements requiring extended written responses were generally not done well. This is an area of whole school development this year (there are exceptions to this, for example, in Geography, where teaching approaches to say, scaffolding, could be extended across the school)*
- *There is a significant gap in the outcomes for non-eFsM and learners in receipt of eFsM. This is also reflected in attendance and broader engagement data. This is a school development priority this year too.*
- *A school priority for 2022-23 is to ensure all leaders share a common understanding of 'what good is' and work together (in concert with peers and the consortium) to develop a 'shared understanding of progression'.*

Like all schools, they are working against the background of the pandemic in re-establishing a sense of standards and – in terms of engagement across all sections of the school community – are not yet back to 'normal' although significant strides have been made (attendance 89%; 25/10/22).

SLT are aware that consistency needs to be ensured amongst middle leaders in their evaluation of standards too. Line-management meetings will focus on regular 'book looks' with middle leaders bringing a selection of books to discuss with leaders. This process will be complemented by a programme of whole school book reviews, learning walks and lesson observations.

The school are also aware of the need to accelerate evaluative work around Estyn inspection areas 2 and 4 to ensure they have a fully accurate and informed perspective of the wellbeing of their learners. The SHRN report raised some important issues which need to be followed up; the school have adapted the PSE programme this year in the light of this and work in the Health and Wellbeing AOLE has been modified too. The school plan to complement their information, gathering feedback in this area through regular use of the Estyn questionnaire in addition to other tools.

The school have used findings from self-evaluation last year to inform planning for this year, highlighting two main areas:

- *The level of challenge*
- *The impact of feedback on learners*

Training has been given to teachers in both these areas and further guidance provided in documentation. The school will evaluate the impact of work in these areas throughout the year.

Having undertaken update training with the SPP, the school have plans to engage with high school peers and also – more imminently – with colleagues from their primary cluster – to look at the ‘shared understanding of progression’ – in line with WG guidance – and also around common areas from development plans – Welsh/ progression/ curriculum for Wales.

Note of Visit 14.2.23

Update on school

-
-
-
-
-

Maths

SSIA to meet with

CfW Readiness

All areas are complete or on track. Only area the school need to address is around language policy statement.

to meet after half-term with AAHT to look at how progress is going and any further support needs going ahead.

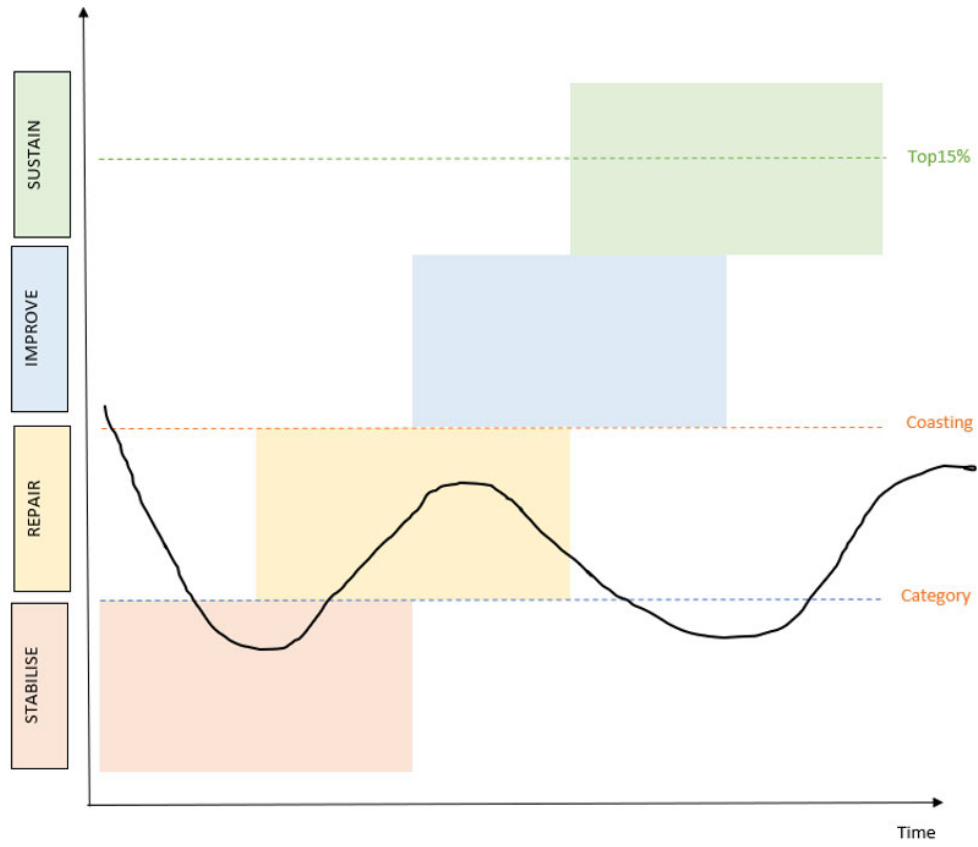
Support plan

Discussed. happy with amendments to plan for this term. has said that evaluative activities from GwE do not take place currently (see note below)

and have – in light of the recent warning letter from LA – said that no evaluative activities be undertaken by the consortium until the appeal against the process has been resolved.

In conclusion, whilst there are clearly areas of good practice and periods of progression the overall trajectory has been variable. Combining the quantitative AWCDS and the more qualitative consortium reports it could be inferred that the school has not managed to achieve a period of consistent progress and consolidation. This could be summarised in the following diagram covering the period 2015 to 2023.

Performance Trajectory



Support Plan

Mae'r gefnogaeth isod yn benodol i'r ysgol ac yn ychwanegol i'r arlwy ranbarthol/leol fydd ar gael i'r ysgol trwy gynnig GwE/ALI
Support programme below will be bespoke to the school and will supplement the regional/local offer which is available via GwE/LA offer

Ysgol School	St David's High School	YCG Cyswllt Link SIA	
Prif feysydd ac agweddau i'w gwella yn yr ysgol Main areas and aspects for improvement in the school	Inspection area 1: Standards and progress		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further improve the progress made by FSM pupils (1.1) 2. Improve outcomes in areas where progress needs to be accelerated. (1.1) 		
	Inspection area 2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Provide further support for pupils' wellbeing and attitude to learning by increasing attendance rates and further reducing fixed term exclusions (2.2) 		
	Inspection area 3: Teaching and learning experiences		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Further increase the level of challenge in lessons so that pupils are stretched to achieve their potential. (3.1) 		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Development and integration of Welsh language skills across the curriculum (3.1) 		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Ensure provision for skills is enhanced in line with the requirements of CfW and ensure pupils make good progress. (3.1) 		

	Inspection area 4: Care, support and guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Continued development of health and wellbeing throughout the school by implementing CfW Health and Wellbeing AoLE (September 2023). (4.1) 8. Further refinement of tracking and monitoring of individual pupil progress within the NEST and to continue to develop an effective intervention strategy. (4.1) 9. Ensure all elements of the ALN reforms are implemented and support for learners is of high quality. (4.1) 10. Further develop the culture of Safeguarding at St. David's. (4.2)
	Inspection area 5: Leadership and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Working with school partners, the consortium, leaders and all staff to develop a shared understanding of progression. (5.3) 12. Governors understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities but currently there are four vacancies. (5.1)

Amcanion a phwrpas yr ymyrraeth
Intervention objectives and purpose

Blaenoriaeth <i>Priority</i>	Manylion am natur y gefnogaeth i'w darparu <i>Details re: nature of support to be provided</i>	Pryd <i>When</i>	Gan <i>By</i>	Deilliannau disgwylidig [proses ac effaith] <i>Expected outcomes [process and effect]</i>	Cyfrifoldebau monitro cynnydd [pwy/pryd] <i>Responsibilities for monitoring impact [who/when]</i>	
---------------------------------	--	---------------------	------------------	---	---	--

<p>Increase the level of challenge in lessons so that pupils are stretched to achieve their potential. (3.1)</p>	<p>Input as required from the school</p> <p>Regular supportive self-evaluation with focussed activities around:</p> <p>Book reviews undertaken with school leaders to focus on level of challenge</p> <p>Learning walks/ lesson observations undertaken with school leaders to focus on the level of challenge in classes</p>	<p>Autumn / Spring Terms</p>	<p>GwE Team</p> <p>SSIAs</p>	<p>Increased level of challenge in books and learner progress evident</p> <p>Development in level of challenge in subject areas where this is currently not the case</p>	<p>SLT supported by GwE</p>	<p>4-5 days over year</p>
<p>Improve standards, progress and outcomes in Welsh. (1.1)</p>	<p>Support the department by:</p> <p>Linking the school with a Welsh Language Department at another school to support the sharing of resources and to discuss a course teaching timetable (Castell Alun)</p>	<p>Autumn /Spring Terms</p>	<p>SSIA for Welsh</p>	<p>Assessments for current Year 11 are completed</p> <p>Teachers have a full working understanding of current GCSE requirements</p> <p>School are supported in the provision of good resources for teaching and learning. Teachers understand the Fundamentals of teaching Welsh</p>	<p>Quality of work in Welsh to be monitored by school with support from GwE</p>	<p>3 days GwE</p> <p>3 days from the two Flintshire schools</p>

	<p>Teachers of examination classes to attend WJEC training courses this term to improve their understanding of the specification.</p> <p>Exploring the possibility of a school's KS3 resources to ensure progression in the development of the learners' skills in the long term and to lay firmer foundations for GCSEs in KS3 (school are working with here)</p> <p>Ensure support for the school to convert the resources into effective plans for their implementation in the school offering training to teachers regarding pedagogy, lesson planning and teaching in line with the resources.</p>	Autumn /Spring Terms	SSIA in conjunction with another school	<p>School are effectively supported in training and evaluating the quality of work</p> <p>Learners enjoy and make progress in Welsh</p>		
--	---	----------------------	---	---	--	--

	<p>Support the school to develop the use of a digital platform (e.g. Google Classroom) to share resources and set tasks</p> <p>Support the monitoring the provision by setting specific milestones for evaluation and ensuring that students in the GCSE classes complete units and are fully aware of the requirements of assessments</p>					
Support for the development of skills – further improve the progress of all pupils in skills, particularly those in receipt of FSM	<p>Provide support for the school initially around provision for literacy (oracy)</p> <p>Initial meeting with to discuss planning and support for this year</p>	Autumn term	SSIA	<p>Increased active oral engagement from learners in class.</p> <p>Books show progress in literacy and increased evidence of extended writing that challenges learners</p>	<p>School, supported in its evaluation by GwE.</p> <p>School Performance Monitoring Group</p> <p>School evidence base to include:</p> <p>Learner voice</p> <p>Learning walks</p>	2 days

	<p>Support for in whole school approaches</p> <p>Delivery of training to whole staff/ curriculum leaders</p> <p>Support in reviewing the quality of current provision</p>				Book reviews focussed on the progress learners are making in literacy	
<p>Ensure all school leaders can evaluate progress accurately and plan for improvement, with have a full understanding of what 'good looks like'.</p> <p>Develop a shared understanding with partner schools, in line with new WG</p>	<p>i) SIA to provide regular coaching and mentoring support to the and SLT members particularly those new to role</p> <p>ii) to work alongside school leaders to support the shaping of school improvement planning linking self-evaluation and SIP in line with new WG guidance</p> <p>iii) GwE team to work alongside senior and middle leaders to provide ongoing support with self-evaluation</p>	Throug hout the year	Mem bers of the GwE team	<p>Leaders' skills in this area are developed, consistent whole school approaches in place and provision accurately evaluated</p> <p>School understanding of 'what good looks like' in the climate of CfW is evolved</p> <p>Coaching SLT/ middle leaders in line-management meetings</p> <p>Self-evaluation work internally and collaborative tasks undertaken with other schools support the development of a 'shared understanding of progression'</p>	<p>School – with support from GwE</p> <p>School Performance Monitoring Group</p>	5/6 days

school improvement guidance.	<p>iv) Access for school leaders to appropriate leadership courses</p> <p>v) Facilitate collaboration with other schools – cluster and alliances - to develop a shared understanding of progression</p>			Support / facilitate the school's partnership work with Primary cluster, secondary alliance and other high schools		
Financial Support to develop a sustainable longer term financial plan which will bring the school back to financial balance	<p>School challenge and support session in line with the</p> <p>Stage 5 FPMG meeting in line with the Council's Protocol for Schools in Financial Difficulty.</p> <p>Support the school in balancing the need to have a robust vacancy management process in place with the need to deliver the curriculum</p>	<p>Autumn 2021</p> <p>17.12.21</p> <p>Ongoing</p>			<p>Local Authority Financial Performance Monitoring Group (FPMG). Stage 5</p> <p>NB: The Governing Body must adhere to any recovery plan agreed with the authority, and regularly monitor adherence to the plan and contact if it appears that the milestones cannot be met.</p>	3 days

	<p>and support learners' needs</p> <p>Support the school in Annual leadership, teacher and support staff structure reviews</p> <p>Support the school to maintain transition related activities to help grow numbers and improve transition experience for learners</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>09.22</p>			<p>DMT</p> <p>School Performance Monitoring Group</p>	
Improving Attendance	<p>Review of school attendance protocols by Support school with interviews where pupil behaviour is placing them at risk of permanent exclusion</p> <p>Work progressively to examine and address the school attendance systems</p>	09.21		<p>Effective attendance systems in place</p> <p>Improved whole school attendance</p> <p>Reduced number of permanent exclusions</p>	SchoolPerformance Monitoring Group	10 days

	<p>Support to construct regular letter to parents with Attendance highlighted.</p> <p>Attend staff meetings to discuss attendance</p> <p>Support school with school assembly once process is embedded.</p>					
Support for disengaged learners – The Bridge Project	<p>Support the school to plan to utilise the Youth Centre opposite the school to create a flexible space into which vulnerable and disengaged pupils can be brought to attempt to “bridge” their way back into mainstream school.</p> <p>The project and these staff will be</p>	<p>25.4.22 Induction for staff</p> <p>25.5.22 Provision start date</p>		<p>School is working in innovative ways to engage and overcome barriers to school attendance. Sessions are designed to reassure pupils and to engage.</p> <p>Learners re-engaged with school; Improved attendance</p>	<p>The project and these staff will be managed by as this is a school led project.</p> <p>School Performance Monitoring Group</p>	

	<p>managed by as this is a school led project.</p> <p>Additional support will be provided on a partnership basis by a variety of services including EWO, ESO,</p> <p>and Progression (this is not an exhaustive list).</p>					
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Appendix 4

360 Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

St David's High School

March 2022

Context

- School senior leaders and middle leaders (AoLE based faculty leads) worked alongside the GwE team to complete a 360 review of teaching and learning
- The aim was to complete a whole school evaluation of teaching and learning (provision and standards) to identify overall strengths and key areas for future development. The focus was also on developing the skills of middle leaders.
- In the absence of benchmarked national exam data and in line with the new Estyn Framework and *Judging Sufficient Progress* the evidence base gathered consists of classroom observations, work scrutiny and learner voice
- A whole school work scrutiny focused learning is needed to complete the picture of teaching and learning in the school. (scheduled for Thursday 24 March). This will focus on key areas such as skills development and the overall quality of teacher written feedback
- To continue to develop subject leader skills there will be follow up workshops with GwE to focus on leading, evaluating and improving teaching and learning in their faculties
- The review will be used to inform improvement planning including an update to the relevant sections of the SEF and School Improvement Plan

Overall Conclusions

The school has important growth points on which to build towards the aim of consistently good teaching. These strengths and areas for development are included in the report below.

17 lessons were visited over a five-day period 28 February -4 March 2022. Expected or better progress was seen in just over half of lessons with strong progress in a few (Strengths in English, humanities and art. Some concerns about Welsh, MFL and Music shared and discussed.) Some progress was seen in nearly all lessons. Linked and sequenced teaching and learning development priorities have already been identified by the school and these will be finalised before the end of March The classroom impact of work on these priorities will further develop provision, standards and overall teaching profile. This impact will be important ahead of an Estyn visit as standards in the current small Year 11 are lower than last year.

Skills

The mapping of cross-curricular opportunities for learners to develop and use their skills in a meaningful context has begun. This is led by the coordinators who will work to support consistency of subject approach.

- Oracy – The majority of learners listen to teachers and peers but often passively. The use of subject specific vocabulary is developing. Pupils will contribute when asked but supporting learners to provide extended oral responses remains an important area for development. This is closely linked to the need to further develop the quality of teacher questioning. Little group work was seen (impact of pandemic?) but opportunities for paired work are missed.

- Writing – The planned whole school book scrutiny is needed to fully evaluate the range of writing skills. There is, however, a clear need to focus on the basic writing skills of less able learners. Scaffolding for these learners was observed in some lessons but not a consistent whole school strategy. Some extended writing opportunities were seen, (English and humanities) but this is an area for development
- Reading – important whole school provision is now in place to improve arrangements for identifying, supporting and monitoring pupils with weaker reading skills including the use of Reading+ The impact of interventions should be closely monitored. Ensuring that the reading age data is used by teachers to support planning will be important. There is a need to continue to develop classroom reading strategies across the school. Opportunities for higher order reading skills need further development
- ICT – Google classroom is well used by learners and chromebooks are readily available. The online provision and digital skills developed during the pandemic provides a growth point for the school.
- Numeracy – some good use of numeracy in a subject context was seen (calculation and measurement in science and data handling skills in ICT). As with other skills areas, numeracy provision will benefit from a whole school approach with a focus on developing higher order skills such as analysis and interpretation.
- Pupils' independent learning skills are an important area for development with very few opportunities seen. The new Curriculum for Wales provides the opportunity to focus on this. Learners particularly enjoyed and engaged with the practical tasks they were given across a range of subjects.

- Welsh Language – little seen across the curriculum and an area for development

Attitudes to Learning

Overall, the majority of learners engage well if passively and remain on task. Learners particularly enjoy practical tasks. Few lessons are disrupted by persistent off task behaviour and teachers apply the school's BfL policy consistently. Best use of seating plans and a consistent approach to the use of mobile phones should be agreed. Learners are too reliant on their teachers so work on building their confidence and resilience needs to continue.

Teaching and learning

Overall lessons are planned as a sequence to ensure progression (this needs developing in Welsh and MFL) and well resourced. Links to prior learning are clear and usually shared with learners. Good, positive relationships were seen in most lessons. Teachers circulate well to provide individual support and oral feedback is good. The WWW/SIT (Subject Improvement Task) approach to teacher feedback is well established and understood by learners. The subject knowledge of teachers is a strength though non-specialist teachers in the early years of KS3 need support and monitoring. A variety of tasks are set and in the majority of lessons teachers' explanations are clear. A positive learning environment is established across the school and in classrooms. In general, however, lessons are teacher led with learners having insufficient opportunities to develop as independent, resilient learners.

The next steps in the development of teaching and learning emerge clearly. Learning objectives are regularly shared at the

start of lessons but a range of learning outcomes are not always planned. Good practice with regard to differentiation should be shared to ensure appropriate challenge and support for all learners to enable them to make progress. This is important in KS3 where year groups are small and their organisation into two or three streams means a wide range of learner needs in each group. Overall the quality of teacher questioning needs to develop as a means of deepening learners' understanding and assessing their progress. Sharing raised teacher expectations with the learners as part of the strategy to raise aspirations will be important. There is some good practice to be shared in modelling particularly in the use of the work of other learners.

Assessment of and for learning

Good oral feedback was seen across the school. Written feedback, including feedback on literacy and numeracy development, can be fully evaluated as part of the work scrutiny. Overall, assessment for learning is a key area for development. This includes the need to share the various classroom strategies for checking and monitoring learner understanding and progress. A whole school approach to summative assessment is in place but should be revisited to ensure consistency. Work on CfW assessment and progression is ongoing as it is in many schools.

Priorities

The next step is to continue to work towards consistently good teaching by focusing initially on a few well sequenced and linked priorities from the 360 evaluation. Giving initiatives time to embed, evaluating their impact on learning and building on existing strengths will also be important. Success will further

increase the proportion of lessons delivering good and strong progress

Subject leaders will play a key role. They are getting to know the quality of provision in their areas and developing their teams.

The school is now well placed to respond with an updated teaching and learning plan. The GwE team can support this.

Suggested initial priorities emerging from this review would be

- i) Review lesson objectives with a view to developing wider use of differentiated learner outcomes. Appropriate challenge and support will key themes. Personalised learning will be an important lens through which to view the development of all aspects of teaching
- ii) Build on the start of lesson routines already established
- iii) Develop questioning – central to deeper learner understanding, effective Assessment for Learning and encouraging extended oral responses
- iv) Keep developing classroom provision for skills starting with a focus on oracy (speaking and listening). This is a good foundation for reading and writing and links well with the other early priorities.
- v) Improved literacy is the key to curriculum access for your less able (and often socially disadvantaged) learners. The school will need to continue work on agreed whole school strategies for developing writing, reading, numeracy and Welsh.
- vi) Develop learner independence – CfW is a vehicle for this

Claire Homard

Chief Officer (Education and Youth)

Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid)



Confidential

St David's High School
Saltney

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 17th January 2023

Ask for/Gofynner am

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Warning Notice – St David's High School

In accordance with the provisions of Part 2 of the *School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013* (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and Welsh Government Statutory Guidance Document (202/2016) *Schools Causing Concern* I hereby serve upon you this formal **Warning Notice**.

As you will be aware, the performance of St David's High School is regularly reviewed by the GwE School Improvement Adviser and through our own processes here in the Local Authority. The school has been subject to a 360° support plan for some time and today we held another meeting of the School Performance Monitoring Group to review progress.

I am writing to formally advise you, following our discussion in the meeting, that the evidence presented today has not provided the Local Authority with sufficient confidence that progress against key improvement actions to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and better outcomes for pupils are being secured. The pace of improvement is too slow, and leaders do not appear to be able to drive improvements without constant interventions from the regional school improvement service.

We are all aware that St David's High School was previously placed in the statutory category of 'In Need of Significant Improvement' in 2016/17. Whilst it was removed from this category in July 2018, many of the shortcomings identified in that inspection report are still evident today. These shortcomings were reflected in the GwE evaluation report of March 2022 where concerns about the inconsistency in the quality of teaching, the development of pupil skills and the poor independence of many learners were referenced again. You will recall that we had a very robust conversation with yourself as
and with last year about the concerns of the Local Authority arising from that evaluation report and we received reassurances that swift progress would be made.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirymflint.gov.uk



The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg

I do acknowledge the huge challenges placed on schools by the Covid-19 pandemic and the huge commitment of the staff at St David's during that difficult time to make provision for learners in very difficult circumstances. I acknowledge that the school's historic financial position has also been very challenging and not allowed the school as much flexibility as it would have liked. We have provided additional resources to support improvement and I would like to acknowledge that _____ and _____ do work effectively in partnership with us to monitor and manage the budget and have taken appropriate steps, with guidance, to reduce the deficit.

However, as _____ I have a responsibility to all learners at the school who only have one chance to benefit from their secondary education. The Local Authority has become increasingly concerned that not every learner at St David's High School is getting the quality of education we would expect, so we have no alternative but to act.

It is our view that the school is at significant risk of being placed in another statutory category of improvement by Estyn should they make a visit. The other concern is that pupil numbers remain persistently low, despite all the positive efforts by the current leadership team to promote the school, indicating that many local parents do not have confidence in the learning offer at St David's High School. Another poor inspection outcome would consolidate this perception still further.

I am satisfied, therefore, that the following grounds, as set out in the Act and Statutory Guidance, exist to warrant the serving of this formal Warning Notice to secure immediate improvement in the specified aspects of the school.

Ground 1: *the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low – in that:*

- The quality of teaching across the school remains inconsistent and there are too many examples of weak teaching
- Pupil progress is not strong enough in many lessons and important weaknesses continue
- Standards in pupils' skills e.g. oracy, reading, writing and the Welsh language are not sufficiently strong
- Many pupils lack independence in their learning because teaching is over-directed
- Leaders' actions are not having a robust impact in making rapid and sustained improvement
- Whilst some progress is being made, pupil attendance remains below average and pupil exclusions, whilst reducing, are still an area of concern.
- Pupils themselves are expressing concern about behaviour in KS3

To address these critical shortcomings, it is absolutely essential that all leaders, all staff and all governors grasp the need for rapid improvement and accelerate the actions outlined in the 360° plan to make demonstrable progress during these next two terms. The number of School Performance Monitoring meetings will be increased to enable more

regular reviews to take place. GwE and the Local Authority will continue to provide significant levels of support. Governors need to heighten their scrutiny of the progress being made and ensure that everyone is held to account for securing the necessary improvements and take appropriate remedial actions if necessary. Should sufficient progress not be made by the end of the summer term then the Local Authority will have no option but to consider further actions under the statutory guidance for 'Schools Causing Concern.'

As _____, you are required to share this Warning Notice with the Governing Body and it is a requirement of the legislation that you respond to my Warning Notice within 15 working days to outline the steps you are taking to address these issues. I appreciate that you and _____ will be very disappointed by this Warning Notice, but I have no alternative but to take this decision with the full support of _____ and _____ who are full appraised of the situation at St David's High School.

Please note that this Warning Notice is also being copied to _____, to _____ to Estyn and to Welsh Government. In the meantime, I anticipate receiving your reply to the Warning Notice no later than Wednesday 7th February 2023.

Yours sincerely

c.c.

c.c.

c.c Estyn

c.c Welsh Government



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

Appendix 6

Private & Confidential

Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Mold
CH7 6ND

By email only

03/02/2023

Dear

Inappropriate Warning Notice

I write in response to your warning notice of 17 January 2023 and further to our meeting of the same date.

Throughout the warning notice you have referred to the Statutory Guidance Document 202/2016. This guidance was superseded in 2017 by document 222/2017. I henceforth refer to the most up to date guidance as the "Statutory Guidance".

I set out our response on behalf of St. David's High School below.

Statutory Guidance

Pre-Warning Letter

1. Paragraph 3.11 of the Statutory Guidance indicates that, where a Local Authority has concerns, a pre-warning notice letter or letter of concern could be issued to a school "as a means to highlight and document concerns that need to be addressed". I question why the Local Authority chose not to do this, as it would have been a more amicable and reasonable method of ensuring improvement whilst maintaining positive communications between the School and the Local Authority.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



2. Instead, the issue of a formal warning notice has come out of the blue and this will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the staff, pupils and local community.
3. To reiterate, the school has not received any official written record of concerns from the School Performance Monitoring Group ("SPMG") or Local Authority prior to the meeting of 17 January 2023. Action points from previous meetings do not relate to any of the grounds identified within the warning notice and, perhaps more importantly, none of the action points from any previous meeting identify any major cause for concern. We are disappointed to be receiving these concerns for the first time in this manner, with no prior discussion or forewarning.
4. I further express concern that myself and _____, have not received copies of official minutes following any of the several SPMG Group meetings we have attended. The Local Authority appear to have no record or written evidence of our rebuttals to the issues discussed, which is particularly concerning. Meetings of such importance should have a complete record of what has been discussed by both parties. At the SPMG meeting on 17th January a more accurate picture of the school's progress was presented, but this has not been documented. Therefore, the Local Authority does not have an accurate picture of the School's achievements and improvements to date.

Grounds

5. You have issued the warning notice under ground 1, set out under Part 2, Chapter 1, section 2 of the *School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013* ("SSOWA"), in that you suggest the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low. Section 2 of SSOWA and paragraph 6 of the Statutory Guidance outlines the references against which a School's performance could be judged as low under ground 1. None of these have been included in the warning notice. This suggests that the Local Authority has no objective evidence that the pupils' standards of performance are low by reference to any of the following:
 - a) The standards that the pupils might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to attain;
 - b) Where relevant, the standards previously attained by the same cohort; and/or
 - c) The standards attained by pupils at comparable schools.
6. We will address the individual points you have raised below, at paragraph [12].

Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

7. Paragraph 4.7 of the Statutory Guidance requires a Local Authority to draw on a suitable range of quantitative and qualitative information to form a complete picture of the school's performance and take the advice of the regional consortia before deciding to issue a warning notice. This should include as a minimum the All Wales Core Data Sets, but should extend to the full range of relevant quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

8. Concerns should be based on an appropriate range of available quantitative and qualitative evidence available including analysis of performance data, direct observation of the quality of teaching, evaluations of leadership and management and information from the respective challenge advisor.

9. You have not provided any such quantitative or qualitative evidence to substantiate the warning notice.

10. All of the school's current data (See Appendix 1) does not support any concern that the standards of the pupils' performance is low and therefore the School considers the Local Authority has inappropriately issued a warning notice.

Areas of Concern

11. I note that the template warning letter included within the Statutory Guidance, which your letter replicates, clearly shows a table of actions for the school to respond to. Your letter does not contain such a table.

12. I will now respond to each concern set out in the warning notice. Although it is noted that you have not provided any evidence to substantiate these concerns.

'The quality of teaching across the school remains inconsistent and there are too many examples of weak teaching'

13. See Appendix 2 recent GwE report. There is no evidence to substantiate this comment.

'Pupil progress is not strong enough in many lessons and important weaknesses continue.'

14. Not only is pupil progress strong it is also improving. I refer you to the GwE report from November 2022, that included statements such as:

- *'All felt they had made progress in most subjects. Maths and English were the most commonly mentioned here.'*
- *'All could find effective examples in their books of where 'subject improvement tasks' had helped them to improve their work.'*
- *'Most learners felt challenged in lessons. Maths/English/History/RE were mentioned'*
- *'The level of challenge was felt to be strong in between a majority of and most books (this accords with what learners said too). Overall, the level of challenge in English, Maths and Science was felt to be good.'*
- *'Level of challenge felt to be higher than last Spring'*

- *'Overall, of the lessons seen in this time, a majority showed an appropriate level of high challenge for learners'.*

15. We as a governing body believe that progress and challenge is at an appropriate level. This can be evidenced in the minutes of our Standards and Progress meetings.

'Standards in pupils' skills e.g. oracy, reading, writing and the Welsh language are not sufficiently strong'

16. It is noted in the enclosed GwE Report of visits to St David's between 13 September and 15 December 2022 outcomes in English and English literature were both pleasing (close to 60% of learners achieving a C or better in both). Outcomes in maths were sound but the school feel there is room to improve. Most foundation subjects, including Geography, History, Music, Drama and Health and Social Care were all good. The school acknowledges there is room to improve.

17. has acknowledged in meetings with GwE that standards in Welsh writing are not strong and has outlined the need for a Welsh Specialist within the school. Teaching of Welsh has been allocated to who will be given peer support from two other Flintshire schools. This, in the School's view is an acceptable action plan, (which has previously been agreed by the Local Authority) which will lead to improved attainment or progress in Welsh writing in the short to medium term.

'Many pupils lack independence in their learning because teaching is over-directed'

18. Many defined as > 70%, has not been quantified as 'many' in any GWE report, therefore this statement is unsubstantiated.

'Leaders' actions are not having a robust impact in making rapid and sustained improvement'

19. The leadership team has a proven track record of moving the school out of the statutory category of 'In need of significant improvement' from June 2018 Estyn Report.

'Whilst some progress is being made, pupil attendance remains below average and pupil exclusions, whilst reducing, are still an area of concern'

20. As of 1st February 2023, our attendance figure was 89.9% which aligns well with the current rates of attendance across Flintshire and Wales as a whole. This is a considerable achievement for a school of our FSM profile and, we note, considerably higher than the next school in Flintshire with a similar but lower FSM cohort. We also compare favourably with other schools across North Wales with similar cohorts.

21. Our exclusion data sits 7th out of 11 schools in Flintshire and improves considerably when compared against schools with similar FSM. The number of exclusions at St David's is rapidly

declining: this is evidenced in the LA's own figures. Having also considered Capped 9 and Level 2 outcome data from schools with comparable FSM, the data at St David's is entirely favourable.

'Pupils themselves are expressing concern about behaviour in KS3'

22. To be clear, this concern was expressed by _____ who were discussing low-level disruption in some lessons. As far as we are aware, the Local Authority has not investigated this any further. However, the school in conjunction with GwE undertook a 'Learning Walk Report' of 16 January 2023, which refers to behaviour as being 'good across all classes and – in some cases – very good'. In the latest GwE notes of visit, the SIA didn't refer any of the findings to _____.
23. I have enclosed the latest GwE report that shows that all of the above-mentioned concerns were not highlighted. (Appendix 2)

Conclusion

24. Based on the lack of quantitative or qualitative evidence to substantiate the need for a warning notice, and the evidence provided in or attached to this response, we consider it unreasonable and irrational for the Local Authority to consider the School being eligible for any intervention action.
25. The impact of the warning notice is that this may lead to good quality staff leaving St David's due to the increased levels of scrutiny and fear over their jobs.

I therefore invite the Local Authority to withdraw the warning notice and notify Estyn and Welsh Government of the withdrawal within the next 15 days.

The School is appreciative of all the support it has received from the Local Authority to date and it wishes to continue the positive interactions referred to above, to enable the School to continue to grow and improve as it has done to date. Continuing on the path of formal action will unnecessarily and unfairly heighten staff and students' concern, especially given the Local Authority's failure to comply with the Statutory Guidance, and the lack of evidence justifying the issue of a warning notice. We await your further response.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 1

Last published 'All Wales Core Data Sets', 2019

2019 FSM - 23.2%

1. 2019 L2+ Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

Section 0 - Summary

[Home](#)

0.2 - achieved and modelled

0.2e Literacy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					39.3	34.7	40.2
2. modelled							37.8
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							2.4

2022 L2+ Result with 42% FSM = 46% (meets 2019 modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

2. 2019 Literacy Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

Section 0 - Summary

[Home](#)

0.2 - achieved and modelled

0.2e Literacy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					39.3	34.7	40.2
2. modelled							37.8
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							2.4

2022 Literacy Result with 42% FSM = 38 (exceeds 2019 modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

3. 2019 Numeracy Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

0.2g Numeracy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					38.7	31.3	36.4
2. modelled							35.7
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							0.7

2022 Result with 42% FSM = 34 (close to modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

Appendix 2

COFNOD YMWELIAD / NOTE OF VISIT

Ysgol / School	St Davids High School	ALL / LA	Flintshire
Pennaeth / Headteacher		YCG / SIA	
Adroddiad gan / Report by	MF	Dyddiad ymweliad / Date of visit	160122

Pwrpas a natur yr ymweliad / Purpose and focus of visit

Attended to school to undertake a number of learning walks with _____ and members of the leadership team (and head of English)

Prif ganfyddiadau / Main findings

Nine classes visited in all. Main findings were:

- 1) Level of challenge. There was a range of approaches here. In some classes eg Year 11 Set 1, the level of challenge was high and there were clear expectations of the learners around a speaking and listening assignment. Similarly, with Year 11 learners in a practical lesson, who were about to embark on exam preparation. Learners were fully engaged here and expectations manifest. In some lessons, eg Year 10 literature, some of the tasks set for learners – although willing – were too easy and seemed designed to occupy learners rather than support improvement. Overall, of the lessons seen in this time, a majority showed an appropriate level of high challenge for learners; tasks for less able learners need to be appropriate to ability range but also provide an opportunity for progress.

2) Attitudes to learning:

Behaviour: behaviour was good across all classes and - in some cases – very good. In a couple of classrooms there was some inattentive behaviour by small groups of learners

In some lessons, learners were too 'passive' and unwilling to get involved in class discussions; the teachers were working very hard here to try and address this but not always facilitating effective learner engagement. The school are aware of this, and are using speaking and listening strategies to address this. Overall, relationships between teachers and learners were good. Learners listen, follow instructions, try to complete tasks they are given and work diligently. In the books seen in classes (a small sample in each) work was well-presented, all showed completed pieces of work and also evidence of the school marking approach (www/ebi etc). When spoken to, learners responded appropriately and politely.

3) Speaking and listening/ skills

There were some good examples of teachers effectively engaging learners in oral work.

In other classes, questions were used but in a more limited way (closed questions) and opportunities to engage learners in recapping or summarising were missed.

Overall, speaking and listening skills were being developed in a majority of classes seen, but not in some.

There were examples of learner reading activities taking place in classes too.

In other classes, reading and interpreting data, reading and completing a cloze exercise, reading from ppt (geography/ Art), using sheets to understand key learning concepts (D/T – ACCESSFM), reading exam criteria (English) were all in use (techniques to break this information down and ensure it is all understood could be enhanced).

Agwedd i gael sylw <i>Aspect for attention</i>	Gweithredu sydd ei angen <i>Required Action</i>	Cyfrifoldeb <i>Responsibility</i>	Erbyn Pryd <i>By when</i>
Oracy	to continue to develop practices with staff which will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the engagement of 'passive' learners Support the further development of learner skills 	with GwE support as needed	Spring term
Continuing support for school leaders in the evaluation of learning and standards		+ GwE Team	Spring / Summer Terms
Materion i sylw yr Arweinydd Craidd neu Uwch Arweinydd Uwchradd <i>Matters which need to be referred to Core Lead or Senior Secondary Lead</i>			

Arwyddwyd / <i>Signed</i>		Dyddiad / <i>Date</i>	170123
---------------------------	--	-----------------------	--------

Private & Confidential

St David's High School
Saltney

By email to

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad

16th February 2023

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Governing Body Response to Warning Notice issued by LA

I write in response to your letter of 3rd February 2023 in relation to the issuing of a Warning Notice to St David's High School by Flintshire County Council.

The Local Authority stands by its decision to issue the Warning Notice as it believes there is sufficient evidence that St David's High School is a 'school causing concern' and that it is a school at serious risk of being placed in a statutory follow up category by Estyn. The Local Authority has a responsibility to act in these circumstances.

The Local Authority considered that a Pre-Warning Notice in this situation was not appropriate due to its level of concern. The Local Authority is confident it has tried to work constructively and amicably with the school over an extended period of time, directly through engagement by senior officers of the Education Portfolio and through its School Performance Monitoring meetings, and also through the longstanding involvement of its designated school improvement partner, GwE. Our collective view is, however, that serious concerns about the school's performance, and its response to our challenge regarding its performance, remain.

The Council refutes your comments that the decision to issue a Warning Notice 'has come out of the blue'. The fact that the school has been in our category of concern for a considerable time and that it is subject to a 360° support plan clearly demonstrates the need for Local Authority and GwE intervention to secure improvement as the school has not been able to achieve this by itself. The concerns of the LA and GwE have been shared with yourself and with and other senior leaders at the school on several occasions and in different contexts. The Council's Partnership Agreement 2021-

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirfflint.gov.uk



2024, which was consulted upon and adopted by all schools, also clearly states the actions that need to be taken by the LA and by Schools/Governing Bodies where a school is identified as causing concern, including escalation through the statutory 'Schools Causing Concern' guidance. You should have been aware, therefore, of the potential for such action to be taken.

St David's High School has a history of being a school where performance has been variable. This was a judgement reached by Estyn when the school was placed in the statutory category of 'In need of significant improvement' in late 2016. Whilst the school was judged to have made sufficient improvement to be removed from this statutory category in June 2018 under the leadership of [redacted], it still remains categorised as a 'school causing concern' now, five years later, for some of the same issues identified in that original report e.g. pupil progress, attitudes to learning and quality of teaching. This demonstrates that improvements have not been sustained or secured and places the school at significant risk of being placed in another statutory category should Estyn return.

Your response references some of the positive comments from the GwE report of January 2023 attached at Appendix 1 but these relate to 'some' classes and 'small' samples. I refer you back to the GwE Evaluation of Teaching undertaken in Feb/March of 2022 where an in-depth review of teaching and learning identified that expected or better progress was only seen in just over half of lessons and strong progress in only a few. It noted that standards in the Year 11 cohort that year were weaker than the previous year. Basic skills of oracy, reading and writing were all identified as needing improvement. It also noted weaknesses in pupils' independent learning strategies, teachers' planning for challenge and differentiation and pupil passivity. This does not provide assurance about the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across the school as a whole and there has been no substantial evidence provided by the school or by GwE that this situation has significantly improved since that time of that review.

With the change in the focus of inspection to greater classroom observation and listening to learners to determine the quality of teaching and learning, rather than a narrow focus on data sets to inform overall judgements, it is the view of the LA and GwE that the school remains at considerable risk and that learners are not being effectively supported to achieve their best outcomes. Reliance on old core data sets, as attached as another appendix to your letter, is not going to be as relevant in a future inspection and [redacted] has been reminded of this on more than one occasion in discussions with officers.

The fact that the school is in receipt of such high levels of support by GwE officers in core areas of the curriculum and in strengthening leadership and management across the school at all levels via the 360° plan is an indicator that the Council's view that St David's High School is a cause for concern and warrants further intervention is appropriate. The level of support provided to the school since 2019 is outlined below:

2019-20	22 days
2020-21	12 days
2021-22	16 days
2022-23	12 days to date (half-way through the academic year)

In addition, you will recall a long meeting I held with yourself and [REDACTED] on 16th March 2022 to discuss some concerns related to an Estyn engagement visit to the school in early March. The inspection team had taken the unprecedented action of alerting [REDACTED] of their concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning which had been informally observed as part of that visit. Those concerns were relayed to myself and senior officers of the Authority and GwE in our regular meeting with Estyn just after that school visit and we were challenged about your current performance and progress since being removed from follow up in 2018. In that meeting we also discussed the Evaluation Report from GwE of their deep dive in March and I clearly indicated to you and [REDACTED] that the report contained significant areas of concern and that it reflected the Estyn narrative of a school in a statutory follow up category. I impressed upon you both the need to work at pace on the priorities for improvement and this has been reiterated through actions in the 360° plan and are more than implicit in GwE's report notes of 16th January 2023.

In your letter you reference your current attendance data. In the recent SPMG meeting it was noted that your data does not align with the data held by the local authority and so this is being investigated.

The statutory guidance at 4.27 does reference a template but it is not a requirement that it should be used. The Council chose not to do so because it believes the content of the letter and the identified priorities for improvement targeted through the 360° plan already outline the areas of concern and the action required. The Council has not placed any additional burdens on the school as a result of the Warning Notice, outlining in its letter that the 360° plan is the main vehicle for securing the necessary improvement, but that it will just increase the number of School Performance Monitoring Meetings. It has given the school until the end of the summer term to demonstrate those improvements, which is a generous timescale in light of the fact that the issues highlighted have been a concern for a long time.

I note that your reply is written in a very legalistic style which appears to indicate that you have sought legal advice. Can you please confirm if this is the case? If it has been obtained from an external provider, can you also please confirm the cost of this advice and where it has been funded from, because as a school in deficit, under the protocol for schools in a licensed deficit, any expenditure outside of the agreed budget plan with the Local Authority needs to be approved in advance.

Your response to date, and comments we believe made recently by [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], only confirm our concerns that the school is not focusing on the most important priorities and has an unrealistic view of its current performance. It would be in everyone's best interests, and most particularly that of the learners, if the school accepted that there are still significant areas of its performance which require focused improvement, despite some progress made to date, and worked constructively with the Local Authority and GwE to achieve this rather than wasting time, energy and possibly the school's deficit budget, on fighting this decision.

So, to conclude, the Council believes it has not acted in an 'unreasonable or irrational' manner and objects to this use of language in your letter. The Council believes there are

clear grounds for the school to be in receipt of a Warning Notice and stands by its decision. As you should be aware from the guidance, managing appeals against a Warning Notice are the responsibility of the Welsh Government and so if you wish to pursue this matter further then you need to address your concerns to them.

Yours sincerely

For the attention of:

St David's High School

Via Email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 27th March 2023

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Please see my responses to the comments make in your letter to Members of the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) sent on 27th February 2023.

The Council does not accept your assertion that St David's High School is being neglected for investment and that it is prioritising 'more affluent areas of Flintshire'. Decisions on school investment are based on a variety of factors including information gathered through suitability and condition surveys, pupil numbers, quality of education provided and affordability/value for money. This is referenced in our School Modernisation Strategy. St David's High School is included in the Council's Band B/Sustainable Learning Communities Strategic Outline Programme for investment.

As Welsh Government generally funds 65% of any new build and the Council has to borrow to meet the remainder, there has to be a very strong business case to secure financial commitment from both Welsh Government and from the Council. With the low numbers at St David's High School and no major improvement to future pupil projections, the level of the school's budget deficit and the concerns about the quality of educational provision, there has to be a degree of realism that securing support for a business case to build a new secondary school in the area is going to be a significant challenge.

Nevertheless, the Council has committed to undertake an informal consultation in the Saltney/Broughton area to engage with the community about the shape of the future education offer and encourage their participation. This work was unfortunately delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and local government elections as consultations could not be undertaken at this time. All headteachers in the area have been part of the process in developing this consultation and we will be re-engaging with them this week to discuss the final version before issuing it into the public domain after the Easter break.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirfflint.gov.uk



With regard to the concerns you have raised specifically around defects in the building, again the Council does not accept that St David's High School is being neglected. Under the Scheme for Financing Schools, it is the responsibility of the school to take remedial action via its Repairs and Maintenance budget to deal with any issues in the first instance. I note that the school has only signed up for the lowest level of SLA support with Property Services. This was not stipulated by the Local Authority and it would have supported a request to purchase a higher level of service had it been approached on this matter.

Despite the level of support purchased by the SLA, it is the Council's view that the school has not been prompt in bringing significant issues to the attention of the relevant officers in the Education Portfolio or Property Services. There is no record of concern about the roof having being shared with any officer prior to this being raised in the School Performance Monitoring meeting. Once it was raised, the Council has undertaken investigations and sought costs for repair. The Council will pay for those repairs and any required remedial work to internal decoration and I have personally authorised that work to be undertaken as quickly as possible. Despite two visits to the school by

, once just before Christmas and again in March, no concerns were raised with about problems with the boiler resulting in the heating not reaching the top floor, so it is disingenuous to claim the Council is at fault. Please provide appropriate evidence of how the school has used its Repairs and Maintenance budget to address these issues in a timely fashion and where it has escalated such issues to the relevant officer if it was felt it was beyond the capacity of the school to remedy.

The Council notes, but does not necessarily agree with your assertion that its previous transport policy decisions have adversely affected St David's High School and this has resulted in established links with Cheshire schools continuing to have a current impact. The S2 bus route was withdrawn in July 2020 after the Council had undertaken a review of historical anomalies in its provision. Parents select a school for a variety of reasons but generally the quality of the education of offer is usually the determining factor. Parents were paying fares for their children to travel to Chester to support their personal choice of school. Perhaps the school needs to reflect more on why this might be the case.

The Council does not accept that because of the licensed deficit agreement, funding coming into the school has been directed to be 'ring fenced purely for paying down the debt'. Whilst there has been a strong focus from Council officers to ensure that the debt is appropriately managed under the Licensed Deficit procedures, officers have also been very clear that the needs of current pupils have to be appropriately met and have supported spending decisions to enable this. These have included (and this is not an exhaustive list) improvements to safeguarding arrangements at the front entrance (approx £6k), additional IT funding (£20k), exam intervention costs (£1k) and funding to support the weekly transition activities in the primary schools for two teachers, 1 day per week for 38 weeks for two years, totalling £37,800 in the hope of boosting transfer rates, particularly from Broughton Primary School.

St David's High School has also benefited considerably from the Council's decision to make additional funding available to support secondary school budgets, particularly those in deficit and those with lower than optimum numbers. For the 2021-22 financial year, St

David's received **£465,268** and will receive **£450,988** for the 2022-23 financial year. This is substantial financial assistance provided by the Council to shore up the school's precarious budgetary position in order to protect learners.

The Education Portfolio has also allowed many school requests for posts to be advertised when they have become vacant across teaching, technical and classroom support roles to sustain the curriculum and pastoral offer. On occasions it has been the school's decision not to proceed with that recruitment. However, it is also appropriate under that protocol that we do challenge the school's staffing plans to ensure they are appropriate and affordable. I note that the school was offered additional intervention funding to assist with particular projects e.g. nurture, but to the best of my knowledge, the business case from the school was never forthcoming.

With regard to your assertion that [redacted] denies a conversation ever took place between Estyn and the Local Authority, I can assure you that it did.

[redacted] who was part of that engagement visit had obviously contacted [redacted] to express concerns about what [redacted] had observed at the school and that was communicated to us in our LALI meeting which took place just after the engagement visit to the school. We were specifically asked by [redacted] for our view of the provision at St David's High School and if it was on our list of schools causing concern because of the feedback he had received directly. I strongly object to your inference that I as [redacted] and [redacted] are being untruthful. We were all in the meeting when this direct question was put to us.

I can assure you that our Warning Notice has not been issued on the basis of the Estyn engagement visit and the subsequent comments. The Warning Notice has been issued on the evidence provided by GwE, and through our own interactions with the school, because of concerns about the pace of progress being made against its improvement priorities, concerns about leadership and governance and the risk of the school being placed in a statutory category by Estyn when they revisit. St David's High School continues to require more intervention than any other Flintshire school and the 360° plan was agreed with the school under the Schools Causing Concern protocol. The Local Authority is confident it has presented a balanced view of the school to Estyn - it is required to provide termly updates on schools identified as 'causing concern'. The Local Authority has no control over the timing of Estyn inspections - the school was last inspected in 2016 so is within the group of Flintshire schools which can expect a visit in the current cycle.

The Local Authority is exercising its statutory function to issue a Warning Notice because it is confident that the school requires significant intervention in the best interest of its learners. Your reference to the Warning Notice having a potentially damaging impact on the community perception of the school is irrelevant. The Warning Notice is a confidential process between the Local Authority and the school. Obviously, Estyn reports are in the public domain and this is what the school should be more concerned about and focusing its efforts on to ensure that any future report is positive.

I am not reassured by your letter to the members of the SPMG that the school is focused on its improvement priorities as your letter spends more time criticising the Council and appears to be an attempt to deflect attention from the shortcomings at the school rather than reflecting on what is being done by leaders and governors to support the learners and make the improvements needed. I am also concerned that the school is refusing to further engage with the SPMG process and any evaluative work by GwE, which suggests it is hiding from scrutiny rather than seeing it as a mechanism to demonstrate how it is making progress in the best interests of its learners and ensure the support being offered is effective and appropriate.

You will recall that the Warning Notice specifically advised you, as _____, to share it with the full governing body. Please provide evidence of the discussions that have been held with the full governing body in relation to this Warning Notice so that I am assured that the school's response and actions undertaken to date, which are referred to within your communications, are understood and supported by the governing body and not unilateral decisions taken by yourself and _____. Copies of governing body agendas and minutes should be provided.

In relation to two other matters raised in your letter, _____ made _____ statement about the reintroduction of performance measures after the original Warning Notice had been issued. _____ statement, and that by Estyn on this issue, makes it very clear that performance measures should only be used for the school's own improvement purposes and that a range of qualitative and quantitative information will be used to make assessments of a school's performance. This reinforces the previous advice given to you by the Council. In relation to the attendance issues, there continues to be a discrepancy in the way LA reports and school reports are being taken from SIMS and this is being investigated. A more detailed response will be given in due course.

Once again, I would urge _____ and the governing body to focus on the improvement priorities identified in the 360°degree support plan and re-engage with GwE and the Local Authority. This would support the best outcomes for the learners at St David's High School and avoid a potentially damaging future Estyn inspection.

I await the specific information I have requested.

Yours sincerely



Private & Confidential

St David's High School

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 24th April 2023

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Warning Notice – Request for Documentation

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 29th March and note its contents.

As the matter is now in the hands of Welsh Government I shall not be making any further response at this time.

However, in my letter of 27th March 2023, I specifically requested copies of Governing Body meeting agendas and minutes since the issuing of the Warning Notice to demonstrate the engagement of the Governors on this issue. These have not yet been provided.

You are formally requested to provide this documentation to me by Friday 28th April.

Yours sincerely

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug. CH7 6ND
www.siryfflint.gov.uk





Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

Appendix 10

Private and Confidential

By email

28th April 2023

Dear

Warning Notice – Request for Documentation

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 24th March. As the matter is now in the hands of Welsh Government I shall be responding solely to your specific request.

Under Section 4 of the Governors Guide to the Law

Point 9

Delegation of Functions to

states that in rare circumstances

carry out certain functions of the Governing Body if a delay in exercising that function is likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school.

in Cases of Urgency,

has the power to

and Leadership Team took the decision that the warning notice will be shared with the Governing Body upon receiving the result of the appeal, given the flaws in the evidence submitted in the original notice and subsequent correspondence.

All meetings of this subcommittee have been fully documented.

I trust this answers your specific question.

Yours sincerely,



Private & Confidential

St David's High School

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 8th May 2023

Ask for/Gofynner ar

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Response to Request for Documentation – Governance & Warning Notice

I write in response to your letter of 28th April 2023 where you advise that the Warning Notice issued to St David's High School has not been shared with the full Governing Body and is being dealt with by the emergency powers afforded to under the school governance regulations and a sub-committee.

I am writing to advise you that it is the local authority's contention that you are in breach of Section 40 of The Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005 as the definition of use of emergency powers is not appropriate to be applied to a Warning Notice issued under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. A Warning Notice is issued to a Governing Body, not just and should have been shared with all governors at the earliest opportunity following its issue. All members of the Governing Body should also have had contributed to, and approved, the formal reply to the local authority.

Although you, in your role as had determined to apply a decision under emergency powers, you have provided no evidence of compliance with the requirement to bring that decision to the attention of the governing body for approval as soon as possible, giving five working days' notice to convene a meeting.

Furthermore, it is our contention that this matter cannot be dealt with by a committee which you have referenced in your response. Committees of a Governing Body must be constituted in accordance with their terms of reference and membership, as approved annually by the Governing Body. We are concerned that this committee has not been appropriately constituted by the Governing Body as you have not provided any terms of reference for this committee or provided any governing body minutes showing when it was approved.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirfflint.gov.uk



We consider this to be a serious breach of the School Governance regulations and have advised Welsh Government accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 12 – Attendance Data

The attendance data question arose at SPMG meeting on 17th January 2023. The headteacher presented data as part of a power-point presentation that did not match our LA data. The LA data for whole school attendance in 2021-2022 was showing as **83.71%, down 3.70%** from 20/21 and placed the school as the 3rd lowest in the LA at the time. The school data for the same period was **87.05%**.

As a result of this, the LA SMIT team conducted an in-depth review of the attendance data in the absence of national verification of attendance data due to covid. From Group Analysis reports:

Attendance data for 2021 -2022 was 83.9%

Attendance for 2020- 2021 was 87.6%

Attendance for 2019 -2020 was 90.3%

Attendance for 2018-2019 was 92%

The autumn term data for 2022 was more complex. At the SPMG meeting on the 17th January 2023, LA data was showing as 89.21% for the first half term and 82.10% for the second half term (overall 85.66%). The school data presented was 89.8% .

Following the analysis by the LA SMIT team (in the absence of national verified data), it was identified that for the period 01/09/2022 – 31/03/2023, there was a discrepancy of 1.84% between the attendance reported by SDHS SIMS system using the overall “Group Analysis” report (89.89) and analysis of the “Insight” Attendance Reports produced from LA Capita ONE data (88.05%).

The LA has further investigated this discrepancy and is able to reach an adjusted figure of 89.64% from LA held data, attributing 1.59% of the above discrepancy to three *known* factors below;

-
- There were a number of pupils using D codes. These are treated positively by school systems but are not counted by the “Insight” Attendance reports.
- When pupil attendance is analysed by NCY cohort, individual pupils’ overall attendance was weighted evenly instead of proportionally to their length of registration. We believe we can resolve this moving forward

When the school was previously placed in the category of significant improvement by Estyn (2016) the LA provided significant support to the school to address the recommendation for improvement around attendance (R2). When the school was removed from this category in 2018 under the leadership of _____, Estyn noted that:

The school has developed suitable strategies to address poor attendance, including the appointment of a designated attendance officer and reviewing arrangements for care, support and guidance. As a result, the school now monitors attendance closely and provides valuable support for pupils with poor attendance. This has had a positive impact on the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals

The school has not been able to demonstrate that it has sustained this since 2019, when attendance has fallen year on year. The school has again had to receiving significant LA support to implement and embed suitable procedures to improve attendance. Since being

removed from Estyn's statutory category the school has not been able to demonstrate self-sustaining capacity to improve. Notwithstanding the impact of the pandemic, taking into account the other concerns around the quality of teaching and learning in the school, the school's attendance data trend is of concern to the local authority and therefore was appropriately referenced in the warning notice. The LA acknowledges improvement in the autumn term data for 2022 however this must be sustained. Looking at the same data sets for the spring term 2023, the overall school attendance has dipped slightly to 89.8%, but of greater concern is the fact that the attendance of two year groups (9& 10) has dipped to 85.0% and 85.8% respectively.

Appendix 13 – Pupil Admissions Issue

Below is the email content I sent to
which *stated*

in response to his emails

Some personal information relating to
purposes)

has been removed for data protection

Email response from

Thank you for your email and your request for advice regarding an admissions query.

The LA policy on admissions adheres to the WG School Admissions Code. All admission authorities must consider and decide on applications for school places in accordance with their published arrangements.

Essentially, to answer your question, under those legislated admissions arrangements, *all maintained schools in Wales (including schools with a designated religious character), that have enough places available (up to and including the admission number) **must** offer a place to every child who has applied (except where they are twice excluded, see paragraphs 3.58 to 3.60).*

As a school therefore, if the above criteria has been met, you are **not** able, as you request, to deny a learner a place.

Your email references concerns you have as a school about known behavioural incidents. The Admissions Code is also very clear on admission arrangements for children with challenging behaviour.

Children with challenging behaviour

3.56 Admission authorities should not refuse to admit a child on the basis of their behaviour elsewhere. Schools should not refuse to admit a child thought to be potentially disruptive, or to exhibit challenging behaviour, on the grounds that the child ought first to be assessed for SEN. The law disapplies the normal principle that parents' preferences should be complied with, only in the 'twice excluded' situation described in paragraph 3.57.

If following admission, a child is found to be seriously and persistently disruptive, then the school may consider disciplinary action, including temporary and, ultimately, permanent exclusion procedures. However it is important to note that children with challenging behaviour may be disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and therefore require reasonable adjustments to be made for them in the school, or require SEN support. The school must be proactive in promoting disability equality in relation to these pupils, as with all disabled pupils.

We, as a local authority and yourself as a maintained school of the LA, do therefore have to adhere to the admissions code. I understand that the school has already been advised by our admissions team that you will have to admit and then seek support and guidance as appropriate. I understand as well that this pupil is in year **X** and the application originally requested a place from the **XXX** so time is of the essence now for the admission to be processed.

proceeded then to give some specific signposting about support that might help with the particular needs of the pupil in question

From:
To:
Subject: FW: EXTERNAL Warning Notice - JMEWL/00504/23 CONFIDENTIAL
Date: 19 January 2024 12:59:02
Attachments: [Outlook-etemfkqv.png](#)
[FINAL- GB response to Warning Notice Withdrawal 19012024.docx](#)

Dear All

Thank you so much for your time this morning. It was greatly appreciated.

We have received a copy of this letter sent to _____ within the last half an hour. We thought you should have sight of as it exemplifies some of the issues we discussed earlier.

Kind regards

From:
Sent: 19 January 2024 12:29
Subject: EXTERNAL Warning Notice - JMEWL/00504/23

CAUTION: This email has reached Flintshire County Council from an external source. Please be extra cautious prior to opening any links or attachments, particularly if you weren't expecting the email or don't recognise the sender.

Annwyl Gydweithwyr/ Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached letter to

, Members of the SPMG and Elected

Members further highlighting concerns the Governing Body has in relation to the withdrawal of a Warning Notice to St Davids High School in December 2023.

Cofion/ Regards,



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

19th January 2024.

Dear _____, elected representatives, Estyn and
Members of the SPMG,

We are writing to acknowledge the letter from _____ dated 22/12/23 and the subsequent response from _____ dated 15/01/2024. Before we re-engage with the Local Authority the Governing Body still has a number of concerns that need addressing. The Local Authority's latest correspondence, far from being conciliatory, reiterates the grounds against the school and does not withdraw any of the unsubstantiated allegations against the school. In fact, the letter not only repeats the allegations but also accuses the school of providing 'misleading and inaccurate' information. I have attached the withdrawal letter sent by the LA in case you have not had sight.

Our main concern still surrounds the unsubstantiated and inappropriate Warning Notice that was issued to the school in January 2023. **We feel we cannot move forward unless the LA can provide compelling evidence to substantiate the Warning Notice or withdraw the notice on the grounds it was issued.** The Governing Body's view is that the school has not 'progressed' rapidly in such a short space of time, but was already placed on a positive trajectory. This positive trajectory could not be achieved in such a short space of time and the Governing Body, _____ and Leadership Team anticipated and predicted the excellent results **before** the Warning Notice was issued.

I would also like to highlight that it is now almost a year since the initial Warning Notice was issued and we have not received any quantitative data from the LA that justifies **ANY** aspect of the original Warning Notice. **This still remains a statutory requirement for issuing a Warning Notice.** Yet 'withdrawal notice' still states:

'...there was insufficient evidence being presented by the school to GwE and Local Authority officers to demonstrate that progress was being made.'

This was not the case. _____ and _____ produced a mass of evidence of pupil progress at various SPMG meetings and this information was ignored because it did not fit the narrative that the Local Authority had created. It was not entered into the minutes of **ANY** of the SPMG meetings, in fact no minutes were ever produced for **ANY** of these meetings. The school is not willing to re-engage with the SPMG or the LA when we have serious concerns around their failure to follow even basic procedures like taking minutes.



If at a future date we do re-engage with the LA, they must abide by the School Partnership Agreement that both parties signed up to. It should also be noted that the school has continued to hold regular meetings with GwE, and this has not been acknowledged in any of _____ correspondence. We as a school are choosing to engage with our partners, but only when an element of trust can be established.

The Local Authority acknowledges that the school's results in the Summer were 'encouraging' but then in her latest correspondence goes on to state:

'It will be important that progress is sustained going forward, particularly when grade boundaries return to normal levels next year.'

This statement lacks any sort of clarity, and it only serves to undermine the hard work and effort of our staff. _____ knows the grade boundaries are irrelevant when looking at the comparative data, because the grade boundaries are the same for every school in Flintshire and across Wales. We can, and have directly compared results with schools in Flintshire and throughout Wales, and as you know, we are significantly above both Flintshire and Welsh averages for Capped 9. It is also worth noting that we are significantly above Welsh Government modelled outcomes in every single key indicator, but this is only deemed as being 'encouraging' by _____.

The same is true on attendance, we are the most deprived school in Flintshire with 37% of our children receiving Free School Meals, yet, we have the joint **best attendance in Flintshire** and reside comfortably in the top quartile of schools in Wales. We are 5.8% above the modelled average and have been above the modelled outcomes for a number of years, an incredible achievement for a school with our FSM profile. Yet, _____ in _____ latest letter rather than giving credit where credit is due, reiterates that there were concerns around 'improving processes around attendance management' and once more fails to provide any evidence to substantiate the statement.

_____ has gone to great lengths to point to the 360 Support Plan, but has once more failed to mention that three of the grounds of the Warning Notice are not even included in the 360 Support Plan. The first time the school knew about three of the LA concerns were when we received the Warning Notice letter on the 17th January 2023. Subsequently, the LA have then failed to substantiate any of these grounds with evidence despite the Governors asking for this on numerous occasions.

Much of the improvements and outcomes _____ and Leadership Team have secured are seriously being put at risk because of the continued actions of the LA.

_____ It should be noted that at no point in this process has any representative of the LA checked on _____, The Governing Body or the Leadership Team.

Members of the Governing Body are concerned that the Local Authority does not comprehend the long-term detrimental impact their actions are having on the school through issuing the Warning Notice inappropriately. Governors are also asking why St. David's was singled out, when we can see from the recent and historical data published by the Welsh Government that there are several schools in Flintshire with much lower FSM, who have not achieved anywhere near the outcomes of St. David's

(in terms of attendance and GCSE outcomes). Furthermore, there are now schools in Flintshire that have gone into Estyn categories that were not issued with Warning Notices. What made St. David's so special and unique that it was chosen for a Warning Notice, when so many other schools were underperforming and subsequently put into a category by Estyn?

We will have to take _____ at _____ word that the Warning Notice was in no way related to the wider discussions for educational provision in the area. The Governing Body would like to believe that it was not a deliberate strategy to undermine the school and force closure. However, in singling out St. David's, not providing the Governing Body with any quantitative data and then refusing to meet the Governing Body, it will mean that questions will continue to be asked of the LA by Governors and elected officials. Furthermore, in the original Warning Notice the LA stated that parents were not choosing St. David's because of the standards of teaching. However, in their own survey of over 1500 parents, it was stated:

'Building conditions and standards of facilities were perceived to be the largest issue when asked what the biggest concern about their school is.'

The LA have therefore been negligent in making an unsubstantiated statement about teaching standards when there is no evidence produced to support it. For the LA to state that the standards of teaching were the issue for the low pupil numbers is both disingenuous and deeply concerning, even more so when the school has seen a recent uptake in the number of learners opting for St. David's. Moreover, _____ had informed (and provided pictures) of the building conditions to the SPMG over a year prior to the engagement survey. Once more _____ was ignored and the images were not entered into the record. The Governing Body has every right to question the motives of the Local Authority when they are making statements without providing any evidence, even more so when the school has been unfairly singled out during a consultation about the future of the school.

The Governing Body feel the LA have again missed the opportunity to re-establish a positive relationship with the school. The withdrawal of the Warning Notice on its original grounds could have been an opportunity to normalise the relationship with the school but instead, _____ has produced more unsubstantiated allegations and reiterated the unwarranted grounds on which the original Warning Notice issued.

At present the Governing Body still rejects the issuing of the Warning Notice as unsubstantiated and inappropriate, and requests that in order to go some way to restoring positive relations, the warning notice should be withdrawn on the original grounds and **not** on the grounds of 'time this matter has been outstanding and the importance of moving forward in a constructive manner in the interests of all the learners.' The relationship between the school and the Local Authority is severely damaged, if not broken, and this needs to be rebuilt for the benefit of all. This will be very difficult given that (a) none of our concerns have been addressed in any meaningful way and (b) the mistrust that has grown in the way this matter has been dealt with by the LA.

We are of the view that some form of independent mediation is required to rebuild trust and address our "openness" concerns. This should fall to a body outside this matter and would/could be best addressed at Ministerial level to provide weight and fairness.

We would again like to thank

for his time in reviewing this matter.

Yours sincerely,

From:
To:
Subject: RE: SWYDDOGOL-AROLYGIAD / OFFICIAL-INSPECTION: Hysbysiad o arolygiad i'r ALI / Notification of inspection to LA - 28585 - St David's High School (6644013)
Date: 22 November 2024 09:14:34
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[Flintshire LA pre inspection report St David's High School Saltney November 2024.pdf](#)

Bore da

Please find attached the report as requested. I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt when convenient.

One other thing; in the notification letter, there are two paragraphs about feedback arrangements. I think one is the standard one for primary and one for secondary so presumably a cut and paste issue but if you could confirm that we are still able to send one LA **and** one Regional Consortium representative to the feedback please.

Cofion a diolch

From:
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2024 9:52 AM
To:
Cc:
Subject: SWYDDOGOL-AROLYGIAD / OFFICIAL-INSPECTION: Hysbysiad o arolygiad i'r ALI / Notification of inspection to LA - 28585 - St David's High School (6644013)

CAUTION: This email has reached Flintshire County Council from an external source. Please be extra cautious prior to opening any links or attachments, particularly if you weren't expecting the email or don't recognise the sender.

Bore da,

Gweler y llythyrau hysbysu atodedig ar gyfer yr arolygiad uchod.

Rhoddwyd gwybod i'r darparwr y bore 'ma.

Fel y nodwyd yn y llythyr, a fydddech cystal ag anfon y templed atodedig wedi'i gwblhau erbyn 22/11/2024.

Diolch yn fawr iawn.

Good morning,

Please see attached the notification letters for the above inspection.

The provider was informed this morning.

As mentioned in the letter, please send me the attached completed template by 22/11/2024.

Thank you very much.

Cofion,

Pre inspection report for maintained schools and PRUs	
Name of school/PRU:	St David's High School
Name of local authority:	Flintshire
Name of other local authorities who may place pupils at the school/PRU:	n/a
Head teacher's name:	
Please note any contextual information that you feel the inspection team should be aware of:	<p>Following recent Flintshire Council approval, the school will be undergoing a multi-million pound capital investment for a programme of refurbishment and refiguration, to address condition and suitability issues. Corporate repair and maintenance funding and support has already been given to the school to address urgent significant condition issues to the total of 0.589m.</p> <p>There have been significant consequential shifts in the roles of some staff.</p> <p>The school's application for a budget deficit for 2024 -2025 has been approved by the Local Authority. Working in conjunction with the LA the school was able to balance its budget at the end of the last financial year, but has been unable to sustain this position.</p>
Please note any particular strengths that you think the inspection team should be aware of:	<p>The 2023-24 All Wales Core Data Set (AWCDS) demonstrates that attendance outcomes sit significantly above the family average. The attendance gap between FSM and non-FSM learners is -6.4%.</p> <p>There is strong school collaboration with a range of the LA's Inclusion & Progression Services. Direct work with , and access to the Community Focused School team, which is based within the school, has helped further develop processes around attendance monitoring and engagement, and facilitated wider community engagement, which is supporting an increase in attendance levels and reduction in levels of permanent exclusion. The school also engages proactively with Fresh Start, a branch of the LA's PRU (Plas Derwen), allowing pupils to experience a stepped approach back into mainstream education where appropriate.</p>
Please note any particular concerns, including safeguarding concerns, that you think the inspection team should be aware of:	None
Any additional information.	None

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject: RE: Formal Complaint- St David's High School
Date: 20 December 2024 12:40:48
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)

Dear all,

On behalf of I acknowledge receipt of the below and attached letters. A formal response will be issued in due course.

Kind regards,

From:
Sent: Friday, December 20, 2024 12:04 PM

To:

Cc:

Subject: Formal Complaint- St David's High School

Importance: High

CAUTION: This email has reached Flintshire County Council from an external source. Please be extra cautious prior to opening any links or attachments, particularly if you weren't expecting the email or don't recognise the sender.

Dear All.

Please find attached formal complaint letters and correspondence sent on behalf of the

and .

Kind regards,

From:
To:
Subject: Correspondence
Date: 30 January 2025 19:37:46
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[CoG to C Homard Jan25v2.docx](#)
[LA Response to COG SDHS 30.1.25.docx](#)

Good evening

Just keeping you in the loop regarding the correspondence today between ourselves and the school. Making progress on engagement!

Regards



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant

St. David's High School



"To be the best you can be, every day"

County Hall
Mold
CH7 6ND

30th January 2025

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated 29th January 2025, the contents of which I discussed with yesterday.

I asked to explain the recent discussions between himself and . explained that his key focus has been to address the areas highlighted in the inspection as relayed by . wasn't present for any feedback meetings or discussions with the Inspection team. wholeheartedly wants to continue to work in collaboration with Flintshire and GwE to provide the best education for our learners, as we have done at all times. key concern was that a '360 support plan' would add another layer of scrutiny, not support, onto staff who are already under a tremendous amount of pressure as a result of this unprecedented inspection process. is in school next week conducting learning walks to support our teaching and learning developments and will deliver further training to staff. We absolutely want to work in collaboration with you, we are just concerned about the .

With regards to paragraph 4 of your letter , I would like to clarify that I do not think for one minute, that, on a personal level, your exercising of your statutory duties has been to the detriment of . I agree, that on a professional level, you have demonstrated an appropriate duty of care. Speaking from my own experience, I have felt very supported by you. You have given me your personal phone number and advised me to call you at any time for support or advice. You also guided me through the Stress Risk Assessment and Occupational Health Referral processes. I have felt very reassured by your presence, and I thank you for this.

My comments on this matter , are not directed at you personally, but are directed at the system, and the circumstances. Whilst I understand the importance of legislation and the inspection process, I believe that under certain circumstances, things **should** be managed more sensitively and alternatives to the standard processes **should** be considered. I feel that in instances such as these, legislation and policy overtake common sense.



Referring to paragraph 12 of your letter, I am receiving the perspective of the current school leaders. However, I am then receiving conflicting information from the Local Authority (via their action in issuing the Warning Notice) and second-hand feedback from Estyn, which can be very confusing to navigate. But based on, first and foremost, the data, the schools modelled outcomes which are regularly shared and discussed at Governor meetings and what I personally witness during lesson observations, school assemblies, performances, community involvement, break and lunch observations and the many other duties I carry out as _____, I simply cannot comprehend why these perspectives are so hugely different. It doesn't make sense to me, at all. How can a school with such positive outcomes, be deemed to be underperforming? And this is what I continue to question. I have in previous correspondence over the past two years sought clarification on this situation, so I can better understand what the external parties' concerns are, but the opportunity to discuss this has never arisen.

Finally, _____, I would like to find a way to move forward in a positive manner. If possible, _____ and I would like to meet with you face to face at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss next steps. We are happy to come to you, but as ever, the doors of St David's High School are always open should you wish to come to us.

Many Thanks.

St David's High School

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad

Ask for/Gofynner

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

30th January 2025

Claire Homard

Dear

Thank you for the prompt response to my letter and your assurances that you and wish to work in constructive partnership with the Local Authority in the best interests of the learners at St David's High School. We welcome your engagement.

Thank you also for the reassurance that you were being kept fully appraised throughout the inspection process.

You raise a number of matters in your letter that I think would be best addressed in a face to face conversation, rather than via a letter. We can explain to you what our protocols are regarding supporting schools and I can assure you it would not result in . We can also discuss the previous Warning Notice, the different perspectives on the school's current performance and the modelled outcomes issue.

I will be in touch, via , with a date and time where we can meet as quickly as possible. I will be including both and in that meeting.

Kind regards

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug. CH7 6ND
www.siryfflint.gov.uk



From:
To:
Subject: RE: SWYDDOGOL-AROLYGIAD / OFFICIAL-INSPECTION: Hysbysiad o arolygiad i'r ALI / Notification of inspection to LA - St David's High School, 30245
Date: 02 May 2025 11:14:53
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.jpg](#)
[image006.jpg](#)
[Flintshire Pre inspection report template St David's High School, Saltney April 2025.pdf](#)

Bore da

Please find attached report as requested.

I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt when convenient.

Cofion

From:
Sent: 28 April 2025 10:20
To:
Cc:
Subject: SWYDDOGOL-AROLYGIAD / OFFICIAL-INSPECTION: Hysbysiad o arolygiad i'r ALI / Notification of inspection to LA - St David's High School, 30245

CAUTION: This email has reached Flintshire County Council from an external source. Please be extra cautious prior to opening any links or attachments, particularly if you weren't expecting the email or don't recognise the sender.

Bore da

Gweler y llythyrau hysbysu atodedig ar gyfer yr arolygiad uchod.

Rhoddwyd gwybod i'r darparwr y bore 'ma.

Fel y nodwyd yn y llythyr, a fyddech cystal ag anfon y templed atodedig wedi'i gwblhau erbyn 02 Mai 2025.

Diolch yn fawr

Good morning

Please see attached the notification letters for the above inspection.

The provider was informed this morning.

As mentioned in the letter, please send me the attached completed template by 02 May 2025.

Many thanks

Pre inspection report for maintained schools and PRUs	
Name of school/PRU:	St David's High School, Saltney
Name of local authority:	Flintshire
Name of other local authorities who may place pupils at the school/PRU:	n/a
Head teacher's name:	
Please note any contextual information that you feel the inspection team should be aware of:	<p>Following recent Flintshire Council approval, the school will be undergoing a multi-million pound capital investment for a programme of refurbishment and refiguration, to address condition and suitability issues. Corporate repair and maintenance funding and support has already been given to the school to address urgent significant condition issues to the total of 0.589m.</p> <p>There have been significant consequential shifts in the roles of some staff.</p> <p>The school's application for a budget deficit for 2024 -2025 was approved by the Local Authority. Working in conjunction with the LA the school was able to balance its budget at the end of the previous financial year but has been unable to sustain this position.</p> <p>The school has recently agreed to participate in a 360 degree LA/GwE support plan and the LA's School Performance Monitoring Group process.</p>
Please note any particular strengths that you think the inspection team should be aware of:	<p>The 2023-24 All Wales Core Data Set (AWCDS) demonstrates that attendance outcomes sit significantly above the family average. The attendance gap between FSM and non-FSM learners is -6.4%.</p> <p>There is strong school collaboration with a range of the LA's Inclusion & Progression Services. Direct work with , and access to the Community Focused School team, which is based within the school, has helped further develop processes around attendance monitoring and engagement, and facilitated wider community engagement. This is supporting an increase in attendance levels and reduction in levels of permanent exclusion. The school also engages proactively with Fresh Start, within the LA's pupil referral unit provision (Plas Derwen), allowing pupils to experience a stepped approach.</p>

Please note any particular concerns, including safeguarding concerns, that you think the inspection team should be aware of:	None
Any additional information.	None

From:
To:
Subject: Warning Notices
Date: 18 January 2023 13:36:44
Attachments: [St David's HS Warning Notice Jan 2023 final.docx](#)

Confidential

St David's High School
Saltney

By email

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad

Ask for/Gofynnwr

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

17th January 2023

Dear

Warning Notice – St David's High School

In accordance with the provisions of Part 2 of the *School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013* (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and Welsh Government Statutory Guidance Document (202/2016) *Schools Causing Concern* I hereby serve upon you this formal **Warning Notice**.

As you will be aware, the performance of St David's High School is regularly reviewed by and through our own processes here in the Local Authority. The school has been subject to a 360° support plan for some time and today we held another meeting of the School Performance Monitoring Group to review progress.

I am writing to formally advise you, following our discussion in the meeting, that the evidence presented today has not provided the Local Authority with sufficient confidence that progress against key improvement actions to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and better outcomes for pupils are being secured. The pace of improvement is too slow, and leaders do not appear to be able to drive improvements without constant interventions from the regional school improvement service.

We are all aware that St David's High School was previously placed in the statutory category of 'In Need of Significant Improvement' in 2016/17. Whilst it was removed from this category in July 2018, many of the shortcomings identified in that inspection report are still evident today. These shortcomings were reflected in the GwE evaluation report of March 2022 where concerns about the inconsistency in the quality of teaching, the development of pupil skills and the poor independence of many learners were referenced again. You will recall that we had a very robust conversation with and with last year about the concerns of the Local Authority arising from that evaluation report and we received reassurances that swift progress would be made.

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirymflint.gov.uk



I do acknowledge the huge challenges placed on schools by the Covid-19 pandemic and the huge commitment of the staff at St David's during that difficult time to make provision for learners in very difficult circumstances. I acknowledge that the school's historic financial position has also been very challenging and not allowed the school as much flexibility as it would have liked. We have provided additional resources to support improvement and I would like to acknowledge that _____ and _____ do work effectively in partnership with us to monitor and manage the budget and have taken appropriate steps, with guidance, to reduce the deficit.

However, as _____ I have a responsibility to all learners at the school who only have one chance to benefit from their secondary education. The Local Authority has become increasingly concerned that not every learner at St David's High School is getting the quality of education we would expect, so we have no alternative but to act.

It is our view that the school is at significant risk of being placed in another statutory category of improvement by Estyn should they make a visit. The other concern is that pupil numbers remain persistently low, despite all the positive efforts by the current leadership team to promote the school, indicating that many local parents do not have confidence in the learning offer at St David's High School. Another poor inspection outcome would consolidate this perception still further.

I am satisfied, therefore, that the following grounds, as set out in the Act and Statutory Guidance, exist to warrant the serving of this formal Warning Notice to secure immediate improvement in the specified aspects of the school.

Ground 1: *the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low – in that:*

- The quality of teaching across the school remains inconsistent and there are too many examples of weak teaching
- Pupil progress is not strong enough in many lessons and important weaknesses continue
- Standards in pupils' skills e.g. oracy, reading, writing and the Welsh language are not sufficiently strong
- Many pupils lack independence in their learning because teaching is over-directed
- Leaders' actions are not having a robust impact in making rapid and sustained improvement
- Whilst some progress is being made, pupil attendance remains below average and pupil exclusions, whilst reducing, are still an area of concern.
- Pupils themselves are expressing concern about behaviour in KS3

To address these critical shortcomings, it is absolutely essential that all leaders, all staff and all governors grasp the need for rapid improvement and accelerate the actions outlined in the 360° plan to make demonstrable progress during these next two terms. The number of School Performance Monitoring meetings will be increased to enable more

regular reviews to take place. GwE and the Local Authority will continue to provide significant levels of support. Governors need to heighten their scrutiny of the progress being made and ensure that everyone is held to account for securing the necessary improvements and take appropriate remedial actions if necessary. Should sufficient progress not be made by the end of the summer term then the Local Authority will have no option but to consider further actions under the statutory guidance for 'Schools Causing Concern.'

As _____, you are required to share this Warning Notice with the Governing Body and it is a requirement of the legislation that you respond to my Warning Notice within 15 working days to outline the steps you are taking to address these issues. I appreciate that you and _____ will be very disappointed by this Warning Notice, but I have no alternative but to take this decision with the full support of _____ and _____ who are fully apprised of the situation at St David's High School.

Please note that this Warning Notice is also being copied to _____, to _____, to Estyn and to Welsh Government. In the meantime, I anticipate receiving your reply to the Warning Notice no later than Wednesday 7th February 2023.

Yours sincerely

c.c.
c.c.
c.c Estyn
c.c Welsh Government

From:
To:
Subject: Confidential - St David's High School
Date: 27 February 2023 22:33:22
Attachments: [2023_02_02_SDHS_Response_to_warning_notice - Solicitor letter1.docx](#)
[LA Response to CoG 16.2.23.docx](#)
[Final Letter to SPMG 27022023.docx](#)

RHYBUDD: Deilliodd yr e-bost hwn o du allan i system E-bost ESTYN. Peidiwch ag ateb, na chlicio ar ddolenni nac agor atodiadau oni bai eich bod yn adnabod cyfeiriad e-bost yr anfonwr ac yn gwybod bod y cynnwys yn ddiogel. **WARNING:** This email originated from outside ESTYN's email system. Do not reply, click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender's email address and know the content is safe.

Dear

Ahead of our next LALI meeting on 10th March, please find attached further correspondence that has been exchanged between the Local Authority and St David's High School in relation to the original warning letter which you were copied into. It provides additional context for the agenda item 'Schools Causing Concern'.

The attachment are:

1. The school's response to the original warning notice
2. The local authority's reply to the school's response to the warning notice
3. A subsequent response from the school to the local authority. We are considering our reply to this latest communication.



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

Private & Confidential

Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Mold
CH7 6ND

By email only

03/02/2023

Dear

Inappropriate Warning Notice

I write in response to your warning notice of 17 January 2023 and further to our meeting of the same date.

Throughout the warning notice you have referred to the Statutory Guidance Document 202/2016. This guidance was superseded in 2017 by document 222/2017. I henceforth refer to the most up to date guidance as the "Statutory Guidance".

I set out our response on behalf of St. David's High School below.

Statutory Guidance

Pre-Warning Letter

1. Paragraph 3.11 of the Statutory Guidance indicates that, where a Local Authority has concerns, a pre-warning notice letter or letter of concern could be issued to a school "as a means to highlight and document concerns that need to be addressed". I question why the Local Authority chose not to do this, as it would have been a more amicable and reasonable method of ensuring improvement whilst maintaining positive communications between the School and the Local Authority.



2. Instead, the issue of a formal warning notice has come out of the blue and this will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the staff, pupils and local community.
3. To reiterate, the school has not received any official written record of concerns from the School Performance Monitoring Group ("SPMG") or Local Authority prior to the meeting of 17 January 2023. Action points from previous meetings do not relate to any of the grounds identified within the warning notice and, perhaps more importantly, none of the action points from any previous meeting identify any major cause for concern. We are disappointed to be receiving these concerns for the first time in this manner, with no prior discussion or forewarning.
4. I further express concern that myself and _____, have not received copies of official minutes following any of the several SPMG Group meetings we have attended. The Local Authority appear to have no record or written evidence of our rebuttals to the issues discussed, which is particularly concerning. Meetings of such importance should have a complete record of what has been discussed by both parties. At the SPMG meeting on 17th January a more accurate picture of the school's progress was presented, but this has not been documented. Therefore, the Local Authority does not have an accurate picture of the School's achievements and improvements to date.

Grounds

5. You have issued the warning notice under ground 1, set out under Part 2, Chapter 1, section 2 of the *School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013* ("SSOWA"), in that you suggest the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low. Section 2 of SSOWA and paragraph 6 of the Statutory Guidance outlines the references against which a School's performance could be judged as low under ground 1. None of these have been included in the warning notice. This suggests that the Local Authority has no objective evidence that the pupils' standards of performance are low by reference to any of the following:
 - a) The standards that the pupils might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to attain;
 - b) Where relevant, the standards previously attained by the same cohort; and/or
 - c) The standards attained by pupils at comparable schools.
6. We will address the individual points you have raised below, at paragraph [12].

Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

7. Paragraph 4.7 of the Statutory Guidance requires a Local Authority to draw on a suitable range of quantitative and qualitative information to form a complete picture of the school's performance and take the advice of the regional consortia before deciding to issue a warning notice. This should include as a minimum the All Wales Core Data Sets, but should extend to the full range of relevant quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

8. Concerns should be based on an appropriate range of available quantitative and qualitative evidence available including analysis of performance data, direct observation of the quality of teaching, evaluations of leadership and management and information from the respective challenge advisor.
9. You have not provided any such quantitative or qualitative evidence to substantiate the warning notice.
10. All of the school's current data (See Appendix 1) does not support any concern that the standards of the pupils' performance is low and therefore the School considers the Local Authority has inappropriately issued a warning notice.

Areas of Concern

11. I note that the template warning letter included within the Statutory Guidance, which your letter replicates, clearly shows a table of actions for the school to respond to. Your letter does not contain such a table.
12. I will now respond to each concern set out in the warning notice. Although it is noted that you have not provided any evidence to substantiate these concerns.

'The quality of teaching across the school remains inconsistent and there are too many examples of weak teaching'

13. See Appendix 2 recent GwE report. There is no evidence to substantiate this comment.

'Pupil progress is not strong enough in many lessons and important weaknesses continue.'

14. Not only is pupil progress strong it is also improving. I refer you to the GwE report from November 2022, that included statements such as:
 - *'All felt they had made progress in most subjects. Maths and English were the most commonly mentioned here.'*
 - *'All could find effective examples in their books of where 'subject improvement tasks' had helped them to improve their work.'*
 - *'Most learners felt challenged in lessons. Maths/English/History/RE were mentioned'*
 - *'The level of challenge was felt to be strong in between a majority of and most books (this accords with what learners said too). Overall, the level of challenge in English, Maths and Science was felt to be good.'*
 - *'Level of challenge felt to be higher than last Spring'*

- *'Overall, of the lessons seen in this time, a majority showed an appropriate level of high challenge for learners'.*

15. We as a governing body believe that progress and challenge is at an appropriate level. This can be evidenced in the minutes of our Standards and Progress meetings.

'Standards in pupils' skills e.g. oracy, reading, writing and the Welsh language are not sufficiently strong'

16. It is noted in the enclosed GwE Report of visits to St David's between 13 September and 15 December 2022 outcomes in English and English literature were both pleasing (close to 60% of learners achieving a C or better in both). Outcomes in maths were sound but the school feel there is room to improve. Most foundation subjects, including Geography, History, Music, Drama and Health and Social Care were all good. The school acknowledges there is room to improve.

17. has acknowledged in meetings with GwE that standards in Welsh writing are not strong and has outlined the need for a Welsh Specialist within the school. Teaching of Welsh has been allocated to who will be given peer support from two other Flintshire schools. This, in the School's view is an acceptable action plan, (which has previously been agreed by the Local Authority) which will lead to improved attainment or progress in Welsh writing in the short to medium term.

'Many pupils lack independence in their learning because teaching is over-directed'

18. Many defined as > 70%, has not been quantified as 'many' in any GWE report, therefore this statement is unsubstantiated.

'Leaders' actions are not having a robust impact in making rapid and sustained improvement'

19. The leadership team has a proven track record of moving the school out of the statutory category of 'In need of significant improvement' from June 2018 Estyn Report.

'Whilst some progress is being made, pupil attendance remains below average and pupil exclusions, whilst reducing, are still an area of concern'

20. As of 1st February 2023, our attendance figure was 89.9% which aligns well with the current rates of attendance across Flintshire and Wales as a whole. This is a considerable achievement for a school of our FSM profile and, we note, considerably higher than the next school in Flintshire with a similar but lower FSM cohort. We also compare favourably with other schools across North Wales with similar cohorts.

21. Our exclusion data sits 7th out of 11 schools in Flintshire and improves considerably when compared against schools with similar FSM. The number of exclusions at St David's is rapidly

declining: this is evidenced in the LA's own figures. Having also considered Capped 9 and Level 2 outcome data from schools with comparable FSM, the data at St David's is entirely favourable.

'Pupils themselves are expressing concern about behaviour in KS3'

22. To be clear, this concern was expressed by _____ who were discussing low-level disruption in some lessons. As far as we are aware, the Local Authority has not investigated this any further. However, the school in conjunction with GwE undertook a 'Learning Walk Report' of 16 January 2023, which refers to behaviour as being 'good across all classes and – in some cases – very good'. In the latest GwE notes of visit, the SIA didn't refer any of the findings to _____.
23. I have enclosed the latest GwE report that shows that all of the above-mentioned concerns were not highlighted. (Appendix 2)

Conclusion

24. Based on the lack of quantitative or qualitative evidence to substantiate the need for a warning notice, and the evidence provided in or attached to this response, we consider it unreasonable and irrational for the Local Authority to consider the School being eligible for any intervention action.
25. The impact of the warning notice is that this may lead to good quality staff leaving St David's due to the increased levels of scrutiny and fear over their jobs.

I therefore invite the Local Authority to withdraw the warning notice and notify Estyn and Welsh Government of the withdrawal within the next 15 days.

The School is appreciative of all the support it has received from the Local Authority to date and it wishes to continue the positive interactions referred to above, to enable the School to continue to grow and improve as it has done to date. Continuing on the path of formal action will unnecessarily and unfairly heighten staff and students' concern, especially given the Local Authority's failure to comply with the Statutory Guidance, and the lack of evidence justifying the issue of a warning notice. We await your further response.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 1

Last published 'All Wales Core Data Sets', 2019

2019 FSM - 23.2%

1. 2019 L2+ Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

Section 0 - Summary

[Home](#)

0.2 - achieved and modelled

0.2e Literacy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					39.3	34.7	40.2
2. modelled							37.8
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							2.4

2022 L2+ Result with 42% FSM = 46% (meets 2019 modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

2. 2019 Literacy Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

Section 0 - Summary

[Home](#)

0.2 - achieved and modelled

0.2e Literacy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					39.3	34.7	40.2
2. modelled							37.8
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							2.4

2022 Literacy Result with 42% FSM = 38 (exceeds 2019 modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

3. 2019 Numeracy Indicator - Outperformed modelled outcomes

0.2g Numeracy indicator – average points score

Title	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. achieved					38.7	31.3	36.4
2. modelled							35.7
3. Difference (achieved - modelled)							0.7

2022 Result with 42% FSM = 34 (close to modelled outcomes at a much higher FSM %)

Appendix 2

COFNOD YMWELIAD / NOTE OF VISIT

Ysgol / School	St Davids High School	ALI / LA	Flintshire
Pennaeth / Headteacher		YCG / SIA	
Adroddiad gan / Report by		Dyddiad ymweliad / Date of visit	160122

Pwrpas a natur yr ymweliad / Purpose and focus of visit

Attended to school to undertake a number of learning walks with _____ and members of the leadership team (and _____)

Prif ganfyddiadau / Main findings

Nine classes visited in all. Main findings were:

- 1) Level of challenge. There was a range of approaches here. In some classes eg Year 11 Set 1, the level of challenge was high and there were clear expectations of the learners around a speaking and listening assignment. Similarly, with Year 11 learners in a practical lesson, who were about to embark on exam preparation. Learners were fully engaged here and expectations manifest. In some lessons, _____, some of the tasks set for learners – although willing – were too easy and seemed designed to occupy learners rather than support improvement. Overall, of the lessons seen in this time, a majority showed an appropriate level of high challenge for learners; tasks for less able learners need to be appropriate to ability range but also provide an opportunity for progress.

2) Attitudes to learning:

Behaviour: behaviour was good across all classes and - in some cases – very good. In a couple of classrooms there was some inattentive behaviour by small groups of learners (_____). In some lessons, learners were too 'passive' and unwilling to get involved in class discussions; the teachers were working very hard here to try and address this but not always facilitating effective learner engagement. The school are aware of this, and are using speaking and listening strategies to address this. Overall, relationships between teachers and learners were good. Learners listen, follow instructions, try to complete tasks they are given and work diligently. In the books seen in classes (a small sample in each) work was well-presented, all showed completed pieces of work and also evidence of the school marking approach (www/ebi etc). When spoken to, learners responded appropriately and politely.

3) Speaking and listening/ skills

There were some good examples of teachers effectively engaging learners in oral work.

In other classes, questions were used but in a more limited way (closed questions) and opportunities to engage learners in recapping or summarising were missed.

Overall, speaking and listening skills were being developed in a majority of classes seen, but not in some.

There were examples of learner reading activities taking place in classes too.

In other classes, reading and interpreting data, reading and completing a cloze exercise, reading from ppt (_____), using sheets to understand key learning concepts (_____), reading exam criteria (_____) were all in use (techniques to break this information down and ensure it is all understood could be enhanced).

Agwedd i gael sylw <i>Aspect for attention</i>	Gweithredu sydd ei angen <i>Required Action</i>	Cyfrifoldeb <i>Responsibility</i>	Erbyn Pryd <i>By when</i>
Oracy	to continue to develop practices with staff which will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the engagement of 'passive' learners Support the further development of learner skills 	with GwE support as needed	Spring term
Continuing support for school leaders in the evaluation of learning and standards		+ GwE Team	Spring / Summer Terms
Materion i sylw yr Arweinydd Craidd neu Uwch Arweinydd Uwchradd <i>Matters which need to be referred to Core Lead or Senior Secondary Lead</i>			

Arwyddwyd / <i>Signed</i>	Dyddiad / <i>Date</i>	170123
---------------------------	-----------------------	--------

Private & Confidential

St David's High School
Saltney

By email to

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf

Date/Dyddiad

16th February 2023

Ask for/Gofynner

Direct Dial/Rhif Union

Dear

Governing Body Response to Warning Notice issued by LA

I write in response to your letter of 3rd February 2023 in relation to the issuing of a Warning Notice to St David's High School by Flintshire County Council.

The Local Authority stands by its decision to issue the Warning Notice as it believes there is sufficient evidence that St David's High School is a 'school causing concern' and that it is a school at serious risk of being placed in a statutory follow up category by Estyn. The Local Authority has a responsibility to act in these circumstances.

The Local Authority considered that a Pre-Warning Notice in this situation was not appropriate due to its level of concern. The Local Authority is confident it has tried to work constructively and amicably with the school over an extended period of time, directly through engagement by senior officers of the Education Portfolio and through its School Performance Monitoring meetings, and also through the longstanding involvement of its designated school improvement partner, GwE. Our collective view is, however, that serious concerns about the school's performance, and its response to our challenge regarding its performance, remain.

The Council refutes your comments that the decision to issue a Warning Notice 'has come out of the blue'. The fact that the school has been in our category of concern for a considerable time and that it is subject to a 360° support plan clearly demonstrates the need for Local Authority and GwE intervention to secure improvement as the school has not been able to achieve this by itself. The concerns of the LA and GwE have been shared with yourself and with and other senior leaders at the school on several occasions and in different contexts. The Council's Partnership Agreement 2021-

County Hall, Mold. CH7 6ND
www.flintshire.gov.uk
Neuadd y Sir, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 6ND
www.sirfflint.gov.uk



2024, which was consulted upon and adopted by all schools, also clearly states the actions that need to be taken by the LA and by Schools/Governing Bodies where a school is identified as causing concern, including escalation through the statutory 'Schools Causing Concern' guidance. You should have been aware, therefore, of the potential for such action to be taken.

St David's High School has a history of being a school where performance has been variable. This was a judgement reached by Estyn when the school was placed in the statutory category of 'In need of significant improvement' in late 2016. Whilst the school was judged to have made sufficient improvement to be removed from this statutory category in June 2018 under the leadership of [redacted], it still remains categorised as a 'school causing concern' now, five years later, for some of the same issues identified in that original report e.g. pupil progress, attitudes to learning and quality of teaching. This demonstrates that improvements have not been sustained or secured and places the school at significant risk of being placed in another statutory category should Estyn return.

Your response references some of the positive comments from the GwE report of January 2023 attached at Appendix 1 but these relate to 'some' classes and 'small' samples. I refer you back to the GwE Evaluation of Teaching undertaken in Feb/March of 2022 where an in-depth review of teaching and learning identified that expected or better progress was only seen in just over half of lessons and strong progress in only a few. It noted that standards in the Year 11 cohort that year were weaker than the previous year. Basic skills of oracy, reading and writing were all identified as needing improvement. It also noted weaknesses in pupils' independent learning strategies, teachers' planning for challenge and differentiation and pupil passivity. This does not provide assurance about the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across the school as a whole and there has been no substantial evidence provided by the school or by GwE that this situation has significantly improved since that time of that review.

With the change in the focus of inspection to greater classroom observation and listening to learners to determine the quality of teaching and learning, rather than a narrow focus on data sets to inform overall judgements, it is the view of the LA and GwE that the school remains at considerable risk and that learners are not being effectively supported to achieve their best outcomes. Reliance on old core data sets, as attached as another appendix to your letter, is not going to be as relevant in a future inspection and [redacted] has been reminded of this on more than one occasion in discussions with officers.

The fact that the school is in receipt of such high levels of support by GwE officers in core areas of the curriculum and in strengthening leadership and management across the school at all levels via the 360° plan is an indicator that the Council's view that St David's High School is a cause for concern and warrants further intervention is appropriate. The level of support provided to the school since 2019 is outlined below:

2019-20	22 days
2020-21	12 days
2021-22	16 days
2022-23	12 days to date (half-way through the academic year)

In addition, you will recall a long meeting I held with yourself and [redacted] on 16th March 2022 to discuss some concerns related to an Estyn engagement visit to the school in early March. The inspection team had taken the unprecedented action of alerting [redacted] of their concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning which had been informally observed as part of that visit. Those concerns were relayed to myself and senior officers of the Authority and GwE in our regular meeting with Estyn just after that school visit and we were challenged about your current performance and progress since being removed from follow up in 2018. In that meeting we also discussed the Evaluation Report from GwE of their deep dive in March and I clearly indicated to you and [redacted] that the report contained significant areas of concern and that it reflected the Estyn narrative of a school in a statutory follow up category. I impressed upon you both the need to work at pace on the priorities for improvement and this has been reiterated through actions in the 360° plan and are more than implicit in GwE's report notes of 16th January 2023.

In your letter you reference your current attendance data. In the recent SPMG meeting it was noted that your data does not align with the data held by the local authority and so this is being investigated.

The statutory guidance at 4.27 does reference a template but it is not a requirement that it should be used. The Council chose not to do so because it believes the content of the letter and the identified priorities for improvement targeted through the 360° plan already outline the areas of concern and the action required. The Council has not placed any additional burdens on the school as a result of the Warning Notice, outlining in its letter that the 360° plan is the main vehicle for securing the necessary improvement, but that it will just increase the number of School Performance Monitoring Meetings. It has given the school until the end of the summer term to demonstrate those improvements, which is a generous timescale in light of the fact that the issues highlighted have been a concern for a long time.

I note that your reply is written in a very legalistic style which appears to indicate that you have sought legal advice. Can you please confirm if this is the case? If it has been obtained from an external provider, can you also please confirm the cost of this advice and where it has been funded from, because as a school in deficit, under the protocol for schools in a licensed deficit, any expenditure outside of the agreed budget plan with the Local Authority needs to be approved in advance.

Your response to date, and comments we believe made recently by [redacted] to [redacted], only confirm our concerns that the school is not focusing on the most important priorities and has an unrealistic view of its current performance. It would be in everyone's best interests, and most particularly that of the learners, if the school accepted that there are still significant areas of its performance which require focused improvement, despite some progress made to date, and worked constructively with the Local Authority and GwE to achieve this rather than wasting time, energy and possibly the school's deficit budget, on fighting this decision.

So, to conclude, the Council believes it has not acted in an 'unreasonable or irrational' manner and objects to this use of language in your letter. The Council believes there are

clear grounds for the school to be in receipt of a Warning Notice and stands by its decision. As you should be aware from the guidance, managing appeals against a Warning Notice are the responsibility of the Welsh Government and so if you wish to pursue this matter further then you need to address your concerns to them.

Yours sincerely



Ysgol Uwchradd Dewi Sant *St. David's High School*



"To be the best you can be, every day"

27th February 2023

Dear Members of the SPMG,

Following the outcome of the recent meeting of the SPMG group, I am writing to you to express my disappointment at the actions of the SPMG and the Local Authority. Next week, we will be taking our appeal to the Welsh Government and outlining our case for an inappropriate Warning Notice. I have attached our response to the Warning Notice, and the Local Authority's response to letter.

I feel that after receiving the response from [redacted] I need to make the members of the SPMG aware of the role that the Local Authority historically have played in the school's current situation. I would like [redacted] and the elected members of the SPMG to know that the previous actions (or failure to act) of the LA have contributed significantly to the position we now find ourselves in. These are not observations or interpretations, but are known facts that are in the public domain.

Before [redacted] was appointed to the position of [redacted] the Local Authority were paying for pupils in the Saltney/Broughton catchment area to be transported to Cheshire schools. The LA were subsidising learners to leave Flintshire provision and join Cheshire schools. This bill was picked up by the Flintshire tax payer. Fortunately, this practice was eventually stopped, but not before many Flintshire families had established links with Cheshire schools, ties that still exist today. Obviously, this has had a detrimental impact on St. David's pupil numbers, something the local authority has not disclosed publicly, or to members of the SPMG.

Despite many attempts to influence LA spending, and provide up to date facilities for the pupils of St. David's, the Governors have failed to secure any commitment to a new school build in the Saltney/Broughton area, despite years of reassurance that the 'LA are committed to a school in the Saltney/ Broughton area'. We are the only school in Flintshire without an all-weather pitch and our facilities lag behind every other school in Flintshire. We are constantly repairing the roof and the children often sit in coats in many lessons, because of the heating not reaching the top floor. These are just two of the major issues we have in a building that is being neglected and not receiving investment.



However, despite the tight budget constraints, the LA and the local members are still investing in capital projects in the more affluent areas of Flintshire. Our new library, literacy garden and gym facilities have been financed entirely by grant funding, and the goodwill of our community. What we have achieved with very little support from the LA has been remarkable, but unfortunately our pupils still don't have parity of resources with learners in other areas of Flintshire.

The Warning Notice states, 'that many local parents do not have confidence in the learning offer at St David's High School.' I would be interested to know where this statement has been sourced as I have evidence to the contrary. Many parents do have confidence in the learning offer, but they don't have confidence in the facilities that the Local Authority have provided.

Furthermore, previous Headteachers were given no restraints on school spending, and under the Local Authority they were allowed to accumulate more than £800,000 of debt.

and have successfully reduced the debt by restructuring and careful recruitment. We acknowledge that the LA have contributed considerable sums of money towards reducing the deficit, but this money has been ring fenced purely for paying down the debt, not on the pupils in our care, or the facilities we are able to offer.

In letter dated 16th February, she has stated,

"In addition, you will recall a long meeting I held with yourself and with on 16th March 2022 to discuss some concerns related to an Estyn engagement visit to the school in early March. The inspection team had taken the unprecedented action of alerting of their concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning which had been informally observed as part of that visit. Those concerns were relayed to myself and senior officers of the Authority and GwE in our regular meeting with Estyn just after that school visit and we were challenged about your current performance and progress since being removed from follow up in 2018."

For clarification on this point, Estyn deny the conversation ever took place and have categorically denied 'alerting' the local authority. I have written confirmation from confirming this.

I will be asking to investigate this statement, because Estyn are adamant that no conversation has taken place about the quality of the teaching provision or books. Here is the full statement from . The statement was emailed to on 22/03/22.

"Annwyl

Thank you for your email with regards to the engagement visit held on the 8th of March.

As you know, our Local Authority Link Inspectors meet with the local authority on a termly basis. These visits do include an opportunity to discuss individual schools and discuss Estyn's work in the local authority. As the meeting occurred after the engagement visit, St David's was included in their discussions.

The link inspectors reiterated the information we shared with you during the engagement visit to St David's. We discussed that you may want to consider how you develop your self-evaluation processes to consider the impact of teaching and the changes to the curriculum on pupils' progress and

standards. The link inspectors asked the local authority about its view on the school's evaluation processes. No discussion was had on the quality of teaching and work in books during our professional dialogue at the end of the engagement visit or during the LA link inspectors meeting.

I hope that this clarifies the situation.

Cofion Cynnes / Kind Regards,

As you can see this is a very clear statement from the HMI.

I also need to make the SPMG aware that the Estyn Engagement Visit to which the letter refers was focused on Curriculum for Wales, and Estyn had no remit to comment on the quality of teaching or books. As you can see from Estyn's own guidance,

The visit or call is not an inspection. There will be no judgements or a written report. The aim of the visit or call is to see how schools are working towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales. We will also have conversations with about their early work on the new additional learning needs requirements. We aim that the visits are supportive and a positive learning experience for us and the school/PRU.

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/faq/will-schools-be-judged-engagement-visitphone-call>

Estyn would be breaking its own guidance by passing judgement even if it was done 'informally'. It seems that the LA are basing a large part of their Warning Notice on a visit where Estyn had no authority to judge and deny making any judgement.

I will be asking to investigate this point, as the LA have now committed in writing that this conversation has taken place and Estyn has confirmed that this conversation has not taken place. This discrepancy will need to be addressed as it now been made clear by the Local Authority that the alleged actions of Estyn have directly led to the issuing of the Warning Notice.

You were correct to note that our reply was written in a very legalistic style and I can confirm this is the case. I can also confirm that this was not paid out of delegated budget, and I can further confirm that any future legal advice will not be paid out of delegated budget. Following review, we have not breached the *Protocols for Schools in Financial Difficulty*.

The letter received from states that a reliance on core data sets is not going to be relevant in a future inspection. This contradicts the statement issued by on the 2nd February 2023 which states a resumption of KS4 measure including outcome data which will be included in the All Wales Core data set.

The letter also refers to the high levels of support offered by GwE officers, this is somewhat misleading. The School has not directly requested such support and the number of days per year that are stated are in fact half days visits, which actually equates to between 3.07% and 5.5% of that academic year.

The letter further states that discrepancies in the attendance data are being investigated. School have been working closely with the Local Authority and ESS who support the SIMS system, and we are confident our data is accurate. This has been relayed to

who indicated to _____ involved that that the school had raised this query, which obviously was not the case.

_____ has raised further points that were not included in the original warning notice and we will be addressing these points with Welsh Government directly. However, I do want to address one further point made by _____,

“Your response to date, and comments we believe made recently by _____ to _____, only confirm our concerns that the school is not focusing on the most important priorities and has an unrealistic view of its current performance.”

I can assure you that _____ is fully focused on school improvements and has entirely realistic view of the school’s current performance. The only ‘distraction’ _____ and myself are currently facing is the one being caused by the actions of the Local Authority. The response letter issued on 16th February states that no additional burdens have been placed on the school as a result of the Warning Notice, and the 360-support plan is the main vehicle for securing the improvement. Therefore, this begs the question what has been achieved by issuing the Warning Notice? The school have been engaging fully and making progress in relation to this.

In relation to the SPMG planned for March, the school will not be attending any future meetings until we have received notification from _____ of the outcome of our appeal. If _____ upholds the Warning Notice we will re-engage with SPMG and GwE, but we will insist on attending when it is mutually convenient for all parties. The school will also insist on having representation to take the minutes. As to date there hasn’t been any records that accurately reflect the conversations that have taken place.

Myself, _____, _____ and SLT are still struggling to comprehend what the LA and elected members have to gain from the actions they have taken. We fail to see the reasoning for pursuing something that would have such a detrimental and devastating effect on the learners of our community. When the news is made public, it will lead to parents not sending their children to St. David’s and staff leaving because of the Warning Notice. I am also concerned that the LA has now provided Estyn with inaccurate and prejudicial information, and this will potentially trigger an inspection. I really am struggling to see how the LA’s current actions are going to improve teaching and learning at St. David’s.

Despite assumptions to the contrary I would like to assure members of the SPMG that the school is not wasting time and energy fighting this decision. We are fully aware of, and completely focused on the priorities that are needed to improve the school, and only have the best interests of our pupils and staff in challenging this decision.

As always myself and _____ are open to dialogue and engagement and if any member of the SPMG would like further information or clarification on any of our points please feel free to contact the school.

Kind Regards,



Cydweithlo • Dysgu • Llwyddo
Collaborating • Learning • Succeeding

Flintshire School Improvement

Termly meeting with Estyn Local Authority Link Inspector

18th December 2023



St David's High School

- The school is still not allowing any verification of standards whilst their appeal against the issuing of a Warning Notice is being processed by the WG.
- As a result, we have no first-hand evidence of standards outside of outcome results from the summer examinations.



St David's High School

Updates on progress outside of scrutiny

- Useful meeting between
- Internal whole school-book review end of November, not verified. School found recent GwE training helpful in putting a focus on an evaluative approach.
- Additional support for GCSE Year 11 in English/ maths/ Science from January (one day/week). Aimed at 15-20 learners; funded via PDG. Focussed on C/D borderline learners.
- Attendance currently 89.42%; exclusions running at a similar level to last year.



Contextual changes:

FSM levels have fallen in 2022-3 (from 42% to 27%). This will impact on the three-year rolling average further next year but should then stabilise the following year.

Overall:

A very good year in terms of outcomes in 2023 and school performance is strong against comparative data. Performance of boys and of those in receipt of free school meals is particularly encouraging (the latter was a key area within the development plan). The school are aware that the current year 11 present a very different cohort and will not achieve as highly.

AWCDS

	C9	A*A	WBQ	Lit	Num	Sc		Avg
SDHS	1	1	1	1	1	1		1.0



Flintshire LA Meeting with Estyn Link Inspector

April 18th 2024

Settings and schools needing additional support or causing concern

St David's High School

- We have limited first-hand evidence of standards outside of outcome results from the summer examinations. We are supporting the school with guidance and training.
- Whilst nascent we have started to develop a training and review programme. This has started with the Science Faculty and Mathematics Faculty.
- The focus of the meeting with Science was to review the preparation work for curriculum for Wales (CfW) undertaken by the department.



Curriculum Review

With the approval of the LA and , GwE commissioned to undertake a curriculum review

Conclusion.

The school's proposed structure provides a stable and sustainable model that the school can use to build an effective curriculum in response to 'Curriculum for Wales'. There are some small savings that could be made immediately:

- Reduction in number of PE groups at KS4
- Reduction in number of groups in selected core subjects in Y11
- Increase in teaching load of leadership team but the impact of such small changes should be carefully considered against any cost savings.

More radical curriculum redesign was explored in the Appendices to the report that might generate further savings in the future but would involve significant investment of leadership time to implement and considerable upheaval for staff and students alike.



Cydwethlo • Dysgu • Llwyddo
Collaborating • Learning • Succeeding

Flintshire Secondary Focus



St David's High School

- Estyn process Tuesday 13th May 2025.
- The school has recently agreed to participate in a 360-degree LA/GwE support plan and the LA's School Performance Monitoring Group process. An enhanced package of support is now focused on self-evaluation, improving teaching and making curriculum provision improvements to Maths, Science and Welsh.
- Externally conducted lesson observation evidence indicates that the school has made improvements to its lesson planning processes resulting in some areas, in a more appropriate degree of challenge in lessons. Significant variation still exists.
- Externally conducted exercise book review evidence highlights significant inconsistencies across key stages and between subjects. In general, the quality of provision is better:
 - In Key Stage 4
 - In the non-core subjects (with the exception of English as a core subject)

