

Report summary for parents and carers on Tonyrefail Community School

Date of inspection: 11/05/2026

Summary

Leaders in Tonyrefail Community school have created a caring and inclusive environment where most pupils feel safe and enjoy being members of the school community. Staff place a high priority on getting to know their pupils well and have established positive working relationships with them. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and show high levels of respect for their teachers and peers.

Since his recent appointment, the headteacher has purposefully realigned senior leaders' roles and responsibilities and has begun to strengthen evaluation and improvement processes. These recent changes have led to improvements in aspects such as the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), securing a positive safeguarding culture and supporting leaders to develop a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, over time leadership has had a limited impact on other important aspects, including the provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and Welsh skills and the quality of teaching. In addition, the school has made limited progress against the recommendations from the previous core inspection. Although leaders have taken recent steps to improve evaluation and improvement processes, too often they focus too heavily on provision and do not consider its impact on pupil progress and well-being well enough.

In a majority of sessions, teaching supports pupils to make expected progress. In these sessions, teachers have suitable expectations of pupils and provide clear explanations to support learning. They model concepts suitably and adapt their teaching in response to pupils' progress. There are a few cases in the secondary phase where effective teaching enables pupils to make strong progress. In these cases, teachers plan carefully for learning and question pupils skilfully to probe and deepen their understanding. However, in both the primary and secondary phases, there is too much variation in the progress that pupils make in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding. A minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' progress or engagement. These teachers plan tasks that do not support pupils' learning and regularly allow pupils to remain passive in learning. In these sessions, pupils make only limited progress.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils in Years 10 to 13, including a range of both academic and vocational qualifications. The school's health and well-being programme is well planned and supports pupils' social and moral development appropriately. Despite this, the school's curriculum for pupils up to Year 9 is not strategically planned or coordinated well enough. As a result, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills or understanding progressively as they move through the school.

The support for pupils' well-being is a positive aspect of the school's work and pupils benefit from a range of strategies and extra-curricular activities designed to support their emotional and physical development well. Transition arrangements are a particular strength which helps pupils settle well to school life and to adapt to change as they move through the school. Leaders place a strong emphasis on mitigating the impact of poverty and provide a broad range of support. This includes providing helpful learning experiences to increase pupils' aspirations. Over the past three years the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals in Year 11 has compared favourably pupils in similar schools. The recent strengthening of attendance processes has helped to secure improvements in pupils' attendance; However, attendance remains too low, particularly that of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

The Complex Learning Centre (CLC) provides a calm and nurturing environment for pupils with complex learning needs. Pupils in this provision feel safe and generally enjoy coming to school. Staff plan a broad range of learning experiences for these pupils which generally supports them to make suitable progress.

The governing body are keen supporters of the school and work productively with leaders to monitor finances and address the school's deficit budget. They engage purposefully with school life and have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendations and next steps

We have made five recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen the quality and impact of evaluation and improvement processes
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils in all phases make strong progress
- R3 Improve the strategic leadership and coordination of the provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and Welsh skills
- R4 Improve attendance, particularly for pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- R5 Ensure that the curriculum up to Year 9 enables pupils to build progressively on their learning

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Full Report

If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the [full report](#)

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