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Maesgwyn Special School
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23/07/2026

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: July 2026

A team of inspectors led by Rachel Hackling HMI, recently visited Maesgwyn Special School to consider the progress the school has made in addressing two of the recommendations from its core inspection in May 2024.

During the visit, we had the opportunity to:

- meet with a focus group of pupils and, staff
- meet with the leadership team
- undertake learning walks
- scrutinise school documentation

We also considered the work the school is doing to improve the quality of teaching and its quality assurance arrangements.

Focus of visit

Improve consistency in the quality of teaching and ensure that teaching meets the additional learning needs of all pupils

Since the time of the core inspection, leaders have placed improving the quality and consistency of teaching at the centre of the school's improvement work. They have introduced a whole-school teaching model that includes consistent lesson structures and the use of clear learning objectives and success criteria. In addition, leaders have reorganised class structures to better reflect pupils' additional learning needs (ALN). As a

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result, staff have a clear framework for planning and delivering learning which is having a positive impact on pupil engagement and progress in their learning.

The school has made strong progress in improving the consistency and quality of teaching. Further, leaders have strengthened approaches to meeting pupils' ALN. Teaching staff have access to improved information about pupils through the introduction of 'class on a page' documents, which summarise individual development plan (IDP) targets and key learning information. Teachers and teaching assistants receive regular opportunities to review pupils' IDPs and discuss planned provision during training and planning sessions. As a result, nearly all staff demonstrate a secure understanding of pupils' individual needs and effectively use a range of strategies, including visual supports, scaffolding, simplified questioning, and picture-based communication resources, to support engagement.

At the time of the visit, nearly all pupils demonstrated exemplary attitudes to learning and were keen to welcome visitors into their classrooms. Pupils reported that they value the support they receive from teaching staff and feel safe, valued and listened to. Nearly all pupils demonstrate positive behaviours and are proud to celebrate the successes and achievements of their peers. In lessons, many pupils confidently explain what they are learning to do and the success criteria for the task. They are confident to share their views and opinions in question-and-answer sessions.

Leaders have strengthened provision beyond the classroom through purposeful investment in both indoor and outdoor facilities. The development of outdoor learning areas and recreational spaces, alongside improvements to communal areas, contributes positively to pupils' well-being and their readiness to learn. Staff make appropriate use of these environments to support pupils who require sensory regulation or quieter spaces before returning successfully to learning. As a result, pupils benefit from environments that increasingly promote positive engagement and emotional well-being.

Leaders provide highly beneficial professional learning opportunities for staff. This is contributing positively to improvements in teaching practice. Regular training sessions, a focus on assessment for learning development, curriculum workshops and subject-specific training accredited learning, have all strengthened staff knowledge and promote a more collaborative approach to teaching.

Leaders have developed increasingly effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and inform teaching. Staff use IDP reviews, end-of-term target evaluations and evidence captured through digital online platforms well to monitor progress. Pupils are appropriately involved in reviewing their own learning, and teachers work collaboratively to evaluate outcomes and adjust provision.

The school may wish to consider

- Continuing to develop approaches to cross-curricular skills development.

Strengthen procedures for quality assurance and improvement planning to focus on pupil progress and the standards they achieve.

Leaders have revised the school leadership structure, including the creation of the assistant head role and delegation of additional responsibilities amongst middle leaders. Leadership responsibilities are now clearly mapped, discussed through professional development reviews, and supported by coaching and mentoring. This new distributed leadership model is strengthening curriculum oversight, improving communication, and increasing staff engagement. Further, staff collaboration is resulting in more consistent planning and curriculum delivery.

Leaders have strengthened the school's quality assurance arrangements through the introduction of a more structured and evaluative approach to monitoring teaching and learning. The recently introduced 'progress pitstop' process enables leaders to review pupils' work alongside evidence captured through tracking systems and provides opportunities to validate teachers' judgements about pupils' progress. These reviews take place twice yearly and are quality assured both internally and externally by the school's improvement partner. This provides leaders with an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Leaders have strengthened quality assurance arrangements to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Leaders undertake a range of activities including learning walks, observations, staff surveys and performance development reviews. This enables them to have a clear understanding of classroom practice and inform school improvement priorities. The personalised mentoring approach, targeted professional learning and workshops are supporting teachers to improve their planning, differentiation, questioning and assessment.

The well-being team has established a consistent and structured approach to supporting pupils through targeted interventions, regular reviews and close partnership working with families. Staff share a common understanding of effective strategies, ensuring that support is applied consistently across the school. As a result, pupils receive timely support that improves their engagement, attendance and ability to access learning successfully.

Leaders have invested purposefully in improving the school's learning environment to better support pupils' learning and well-being. Recent developments include a new building, enhanced classroom resources, sensory equipment, teaching toolkits, improvements to outdoor learning spaces and the creation of a multi-use games area

(MUGA). These developments provide pupils with a broader range of opportunities to engage in learning, physical activity and social interaction.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern. As part of our visit we raised a safeguarding issue with the school, this was addressed before the visit concluded. We recorded this concern in a safeguarding letter which was issued to the school and local authority.

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

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6747006>

Yours sincerely



Dyfrig Ellis

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