

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

Abertillery Learning Community

**Alma Street
Abertillery
Blaenau Gwent
NP13 1YL**

Date of visit: July 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Abertillery Learning Community is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils of all abilities make suitable progress, particularly in the secondary phase

Since the core inspection, leaders have revised the teaching and learning strategy based on their 'framework for progress'. Teaching strategies to model good work, develop pupils' thinking and build positive relationships are becoming established across the school.

Bespoke and targeted professional learning for staff, including sharing best practice, has focused closely on teaching and learning. Tailored coaching has had a positive impact on teaching throughout the school. This has contributed to improving the quality of teaching across the school.

Most teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and are effective language models. They develop pupils' understanding of subject-specific terminology purposefully through strategies such as word walls, sentence starters and repetition. Most teachers establish positive and respectful working relationships with pupils and create calm, purposeful learning environments with clear routines and expectations. Many teachers develop pupils' vocabulary effectively, particularly in the lower school, where many pupils start school with limited language skills.

In many cases, teachers plan lessons that build pupils' knowledge and skills progressively. They use suitable starter activities to recall prior knowledge and prepare pupils for new learning. They provide clear explanations; model learning effectively and circulate the classroom purposefully to support pupils and address misconceptions. They question appropriately to assess pupils' understanding and provide timely verbal feedback that helps pupils improve their work. Where teaching is strongest, teachers use assessment information well, provide purposeful challenge and use probing questions that deepen pupils' thinking. As a result of these improvements in teaching, many pupils make appropriate progress, and a few make strong progress.

In a few cases, teaching lacks sufficient pace, clear modelling or consistently high expectations. In these instances, teachers talk for too long or do not monitor pupils work closely enough, which reduces pupils' engagement. They plan activities that keep pupils busy rather than tasks to deepen their knowledge and understanding. These teachers do not consistently use follow-up questions and occasionally accept brief responses without encouraging pupils to explain their thinking fully. As a result, a few pupils make limited progress.

The quality of written feedback has improved since the core inspection but still varies across subjects. Many pupils benefit from feedback that is effective and provides clear next steps for improvement. Pupils respond well to this feedback through activities to 'close the gap'. However, feedback is sometimes too general, and teachers do not always address spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

R2. Provide meaningful challenging opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills

Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened the strategic leadership of literacy and numeracy through having clear roles and improved planning, and by increasing capacity to support whole-school improvement. As a result, skills leaders have a better understanding of their responsibilities and provide more effective support and challenge to curriculum leaders. Leaders evaluate provision regularly through a suitable range of quality assurance activities. This has enabled them to plan and develop professional learning and resources appropriately. However, many whole-school approaches are not embedded fully, and self-evaluation focuses more on the implementation of agreed strategies for developing pupils' skills than on their impact on pupils' standards.

Staff have benefited from helpful professional learning, coaching and collaboration with other schools and the local authority, which has improved their confidence and awareness of how to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, teachers increasingly plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in authentic curriculum contexts. However, the level of challenge in sessions across the school remains too variable. In a few instances, activities lack sufficient depth, limiting opportunities for pupils to think independently and develop more advanced skills alongside their subject knowledge and understanding.

As they progress through the school, many pupils communicate orally with increasing confidence. They locate, select and analyse information successfully from a range of texts and write independently for an increasing range of purposes and audiences. A few apply more advanced reading skills, including inference and comparison, appropriately. Many

use a range of techniques to produce engaging and varied writing. Leaders have raised the profile of reading through whole-school initiatives, professional learning and structured reading programmes. However, teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to develop more advanced reading skills. Opportunities for extended writing remain inconsistent and a majority of pupils, including the more able, continue to make frequent spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

Across the school, teachers provide more meaningful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in different contexts. In the lower school, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of symmetry and apply budgeting skills successfully in real-life contexts. In the upper school, many pupils apply their numeracy skills appropriately for example, in science by drawing and interpreting graphs, calculating percentages and rearranging formulae. Leaders have strengthened curriculum planning by aligning mathematics with science and geography so that pupils are introduced to key concepts before applying them across the curriculum. However, the opportunities for the progressive application of numeracy skills across relevant curriculum areas remains inconsistent.

R3. Ensure that leaders identify clear and specific actions when planning for improvement, particularly in relation to improving teaching

Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened the school's arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning. These activities now identify specific aspects of teaching that require improvement. As a result, quality assurance findings inform agreed whole-school teaching and learning priorities, including questioning, feedback, modelling, and checking pupils' understanding.

Professional learning is now aligned more closely to these identified priorities. Staff at all levels benefit from targeted coaching, mentoring and bespoke professional learning programmes, which support the implementation of agreed teaching approaches. Across the school, there is greater use of strategies such as mini whiteboards, probing questioning and 'hot tasks'. However, the effectiveness of these approaches remains variable.

Leaders have also strengthened accountability arrangements. Curriculum leaders participate in regular line management meetings where they discuss quality assurance findings and review progress against agreed actions. They contribute increasingly to monitoring activities. As a result, leaders are better placed to identify priorities and plan appropriate actions within their areas of responsibility. Across curriculum areas, leaders increasingly exemplify how evaluation findings have informed improvement work. For

example, following quality assurance activities, teachers have changed how they use starter activities and developed the use of open-ended questioning.

Overall, there are now stronger links between self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional learning than at the time of the core inspection. Whilst leaders are increasingly able to identify appropriate actions for improvement, they recognise that there remains some variation in the quality of teaching. The school has made suitable progress in reducing this variation and has proactively restructured the leadership team to build on this momentum and drive further improvements next year.

R4. Ensure that the school meets the statutory requirement for pupils to study Welsh up to the age of 16

Since the core inspection, the school has responded effectively to this recommendation and now meets its statutory duty by ensuring that all pupils study Welsh up to the age of 16. Leaders have strengthened strategic oversight by establishing clear leadership for Welsh, securing productive partnership working and adopting a clear improvement plan. They have redesigned the Welsh curriculum and aligned it suitably with qualification reform. Leaders have successfully raised the profile of Welsh throughout the school, particularly through the work of the ‘Criw Cymraeg’.