

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

Gowerton School

**Cecil Road
Gowerton
SA4 3DL**

Date of visit: June 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Gowerton School 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. Refine the roles and responsibilities of all senior leaders and ensure that they are held to account robustly

Since the core inspection, the school has restructured its senior leadership team and recruited additional senior leaders, enabling the team to focus strategically on school improvement. Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are now defined clearly through revised job descriptions and a leadership structure that balances strategic and operational responsibilities appropriately. As a result, leadership is having a positive impact on important aspects of the school's work.

The headteacher has strengthened oversight of the senior leadership team through direct line management arrangements with all senior leaders. This has provided clear accountability and enabled the headteacher to develop a more accurate understanding of leaders' strengths and their areas for development. Accountability arrangements have also strengthened for leaders at all levels. There are now common agendas, clear expectations and more consistent follow-up of agreed actions.

Senior leaders are helping many middle leaders to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Line management arrangements for middle leaders are clearer and more effective than at the time of the core inspection, with senior leaders providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge. Middle leaders are now held to account robustly. They are challenged on important aspects such as quality assurance findings, improvement planning and the impact of professional learning activities within their areas of responsibility. In addition, the increased visibility and presence of senior leaders across the school has improved communication and their accessibility to staff, contributing to stronger leadership at all levels.

Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to senior leaders, including the headteacher, through robust monitoring of progress against the school's improvement priorities. Overall, accountability arrangements have strengthened considerably since the core inspection. However, leaders do not always demonstrate clearly how robust accountability has led to improvements in teaching, leadership or pupils' outcomes.

R2. Strengthen self-evaluation processes so that leaders have an accurate view of the school's areas for development and plan for improvement precisely

Since the core inspection, the school's processes for evaluating its provision and planning for improvement have been thoroughly revised and strengthened. These changes have been clearly communicated to all staff and have led to a positive shift in school culture.

The introduction of a clear self-evaluation calendar has ensured that leaders at all levels engage in purposeful quality assurance activities, supported effectively by external partners. As a result, leaders are beginning to produce suitably rigorous evaluations of areas for development. They consider the proportion of pupils making progress in specific aspects of their work which is supporting their ability to monitor progress with more precision.

Middle leaders benefit from a range of helpful professional learning opportunities. They play an active role in whole-school quality assurance processes. This includes joint lesson observations and work scrutiny with senior leaders, and this is helping to secure greater consistency in the evaluation of teaching. Leaders analyse a wide range of data carefully, including attendance data, to consider the school's performance. As a result, they are starting to focus more precisely on aspects of teaching that support the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Where appropriate, improvement planning increasingly reflects the school's focus on developing teaching and the provision for pupils' literacy skills. However, there remains some variation in how precisely leaders evaluate this provision.

Across the school, leaders' ability to self-evaluate and plan for improvement is stronger than at the time of the core inspection. The strengthening of this aspect of the school's work has enabled leaders to gather a more realistic and clearer view of the quality of teaching and start to bring about improvement.

R3. Improve the quality of teaching to address the shortcomings identified in the report

Over the last year, the school has strengthened the leadership of this aspect of its work appropriately. This has helped to sharpen the school's strategic focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching. Staff have worked collaboratively to develop 'A Gowerton Lesson' which provides helpful guidance on establishing a positive learning culture.

Together with useful professional learning, this work is beginning to have a positive impact on aspects of teaching such as effective openings to lessons, assessment of learning and verbal feedback. Generally, the quality of teaching has improved since the core inspection although some important aspects remain too variable.

Most teachers foster positive working relationships with pupils. They establish effective routines at the start of lessons that support pupils' learning well. For example, teachers use 'Do It Now' activities suitably to recall prior learning or activate new learning. As a result, many pupils settle quickly to their work and engage well in their learning.

In lessons, many pupils make at least expected progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is effective, teachers have secure subject knowledge and use subject-specific vocabulary well, expecting pupils to do the same. They manage behaviour effectively when required and plan activities that are sequenced and increase appropriately in difficulty. In these lessons, teachers provide generally clear explanations and use modelling appropriately to support pupils' learning. They have suitable expectations of what pupils can achieve, and the pace of teaching generally matches the pace of learning.

In many instances, teachers ask suitable questions to check pupils' prior learning and understanding. They use a range of effective assessment approaches to gain a sound understanding of the progress pupils are making. They also provide helpful verbal feedback that supports pupils to improve their work. However, teachers do not always use the information they gather from assessment well enough to adapt their teaching, and this prevents a few pupils from making the progress they could.

In those lessons where teaching is particularly effective, teachers:

- have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately
- adjust the pace of learning effectively in response to pupils' progress and use questioning purposefully to deepen pupils' understanding
- support pupils to reflect regularly on success criteria when considering the progress they are making in lessons

In a minority of lessons, shortcomings in teaching limit pupils' progress. For example, in some instances, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low and they do not challenge all pupils well enough. They plan activities that are over-scaffolded and do not develop pupils' independence in their learning. At times, teachers' explanations are overly long or unclear, and the pace of learning does not match pupils' needs well enough. In a few lessons, teachers focus on what tasks pupils will do rather than what they will learn, and do not deepen pupils' understanding suitably. In addition, a few teachers do not manage low-level disruption well enough.

A few teachers provide useful, subject-focused written feedback that identifies clear next steps, and pupils respond by improving their work. However, too often feedback is overly generic and does not help pupils improve their work well enough.

R4. Improve the provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum, in particular reading and writing

Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened appropriately the provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. They now communicate a clear and coherent vision and evaluate their provision with suitable rigor. As a result, leaders have a secure understanding of both strengths and shortcomings and use this effectively to identify appropriate priorities and to plan strategically for improvement. Staff have benefited from worthwhile professional learning, which is helping them to provide improved opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum.

Leaders have placed a purposeful focus on promoting a positive culture of reading. They have refurbished and restocked the school library to create a more engaging environment and share reading recommendations with pupils and parents through regular newsletters. They also arrange for authors to visit the school, which helps to inspire pupils' interest in storytelling and reading more widely. In addition, the school has introduced valuable interventions to support pupils with weaker reading skills.

Teachers provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to engage with a range of suitably challenging fiction and non-fiction texts. In English, for example, more able Year 9 pupils analyse Charlotte Brontë's use of gothic conventions in 'Jane Eyre'. In Welsh, when studying 'Y Past Dannedd' and a Welsh translation of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', pupils recall and use new vocabulary appropriately. In international languages, pupils read texts in the target language and apply effective strategies to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Following the introduction of the 'Gowerton Reading Strands', teachers place a suitable emphasis on the explicit teaching of reading skills and providing opportunities for pupils to practise advanced reading skills across the curriculum. For example, in geography, many pupils compare and contrast texts effectively when considering the impact of climate change. Despite this, reading tasks are not always sufficiently challenging, which limits the progress pupils make. The school is beginning to develop pupils' vocabulary to enable them to access more challenging texts. This worthwhile focus on vocabulary is also improving the quality of pupils' verbal responses. However, there is variability in how well teachers pre-teach vocabulary.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to write for different audiences and purposes across the curriculum.

Generally, pupils use appropriate formats and vary the tone and structure of their writing effectively, for example when producing book reviews and formal letters. However, there remains too much variability in how effectively teachers support pupils to write at length across the curriculum. In addition, there is a lack of consistency in the correction of

spelling and grammatical errors. Too often, teacher feedback on extended writing lacks precision and consequently pupils do not always know how to improve their work.

R5. Improve attendance

Since the core inspection, the school has continued to develop its culture of promoting the importance of regular attendance. Staff at all levels understand the role they play in improving attendance.

Leaders have strengthened systems and processes for monitoring and improving attendance. They use attendance and attainment information effectively to identify concerns and intervene promptly. Leaders analyse attendance data to identify trends and groups of pupils who require additional support. This facilitates the development of tailored provision and a well-coordinated, graduated response across the school. The work of the dedicated attendance team has contributed well to consistency and clarity in practice and improved attendance rates overall.

Leaders promote positive attendance through regular communication with parents and carers and clear reward systems. They plan suitable opportunities for pupils to catch up on any lost learning to help them re-engage in school. Processes to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance have improved, including through effective transition arrangements. As a result, the school identifies concerns and provides support in a timely fashion.

Attendance has improved over the last two years, and in 2024-2025 was above that of similar schools. Unverified school data for this academic year indicates that attendance rates continue to improve. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved and remains consistently above the national average for this group of pupils. In addition, rates of persistent absence have reduced since 2022–2023.