Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

Abersychan Comprehensive School

Incline Road
Abersychan
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 7DF

Date of visit: November 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Abersychan Comprehensive 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. Address the safeguarding issue identified during the inspection

The safeguarding issue identified at the time of the core inspection has been addressed.

R2. Strengthen the impact of leadership, in particular by ensuring that processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning are consistently rigorous and robust

Since the core inspection, the school has taken a range of appropriate steps to strengthen leadership. This has had a positive impact on some important aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and skills provision. However, they have not had a sufficient impact on pupils' performance at the end of Year 11, where performance in mathematics, English and science has been well below that of similar schools for the past three years.

Senior and middle leadership roles have been reviewed and refined suitably to focus clearly on the school's improvement priorities and make best use of leaders' skills and experience. This has, in many instances, helped leaders to address effectively the areas for improvement identified in the core inspection.

Leaders at all levels carry out a suitable range of self-evaluation activities. A collaborative approach to this work has helped leaders to develop a shared understanding of the school's key strengths and areas for development. In addition, this approach is supporting curriculum middle leaders to carry out this aspect of their role more effectively.

In general, self-evaluation activities now focus appropriately on the impact of provision on pupil progress. As a result, coordinators and subject leaders have a more secure understanding of the specific aspects requiring improvement in their areas of responsibility. This is helping them to plan for improvement and adapt their provision more effectively. However, there remains variation in how robustly and precisely they

evaluate provision. For example, they do not always identify clearly enough which specific literacy or numeracy skills require improvement.

The school has strengthened arrangements for line management suitably. Middle leaders receive valuable support from their line manager and, in many cases, appropriate challenge. Although subject leaders have benefited from professional learning to carry out this aspect of their role, their capacity to hold their teams to account is at an early stage.

Last year, the school strengthened its 'accelerating learning, teaching and skills' (ALTS) process, which synthesises self-evaluation evidence in order to monitor progress against improvement priorities. This process has recently been sensibly refined to ensure that it provides senior leaders and subject teams with increasingly robust and accurate information. This is helping senior and middle leaders to track progress against priorities, identify aspects that require further improvement and to hold staff to account.

R3. Improve the effectiveness of teaching so that pupils make consistently strong progress

Since the core inspection, senior leaders have placed a high priority on improving the quality of teaching, and have implemented a range of appropriate processes to support and challenge staff to improve their practice. This has included introducing worthwhile professional learning activities that have focused on the aspects of teaching most in need of improvement. Leaders have underpinned their approach to improving teaching by putting a focus on developing a 'culture for learning'. Overall, the quality and impact of teaching has improved since the core inspection.

In general, teachers develop positive working relationships with pupils and use helpful classroom routines to ensure that many engage purposefully in learning.

In many lessons, pupils make at least expected progress. In these lessons, teachers:

- Plan suitably for learning and use a range of engaging tasks that support pupils to build on their progress
- Provide clear explanations and model processes, using questioning suitably to test pupils' recall and understanding of tasks
- Match the pace of lessons appropriately to pupils' learning and use assessment information helpfully to adapt and inform their teaching

A few teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils and share a strong enthusiasm for their subject. These teachers model learning and thinking processes carefully and use

questioning effectively to challenge, probe and deepen pupils' learning. This supports pupils to make strong progress.

In a minority of instances, shortcomings in teaching reduce the progress that pupils make. In these lessons, teachers:

- Do not have high enough expectations of pupils' progress and engagement, often allowing them to remain passive in lessons
- Plan for what they want pupils to do rather than for what they want them to learn, often limiting the development of pupils' independence
- Do not use questioning well enough to challenge pupils to improve their learning or to develop their verbal responses

Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on supporting teachers to improve the quality of verbal feedback during lessons. Many teachers circulate their classrooms and provide helpful 'live feedback' that supports pupils to improve their work. In addition, many make helpful use of mini whiteboards, when appropriate, to assess pupil progress and adapt their teaching in response.

R4. Improve attendance, in particular that of pupils eligible for free school meals

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened its approach to improving attendance. Senior leaders provide clear direction and accountability and staff have a shared understanding of their responsibilities. The 'Attendance, Behaviour and Culture' (ABC) strategy and 'STRIVE' procedures have established a more systematic approach, with greater emphasis on robust tracking, building positive relationships and celebrating good and improved attendance.

Leaders use attendance information effectively to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence. The pastoral team use regular review meetings to coordinate personalised interventions based on their knowledge of pupils and their families. Pastoral staff provide valuable support for pupils with poor attendance. Targeted approaches, including worthwhile alternative curriculum pathways, help improve attendance for those pupils who are particularly vulnerable.

Overall attendance improved from 84.3% in 2024–2025 to 87.0% in 2025–2026. Persistent absence reduced from 45.4% to 40.3% over the same period. Attendance among pupils eligible for free school meals improved notably to 80.6% and is now broadly in line with the attendance of their peers in similar schools.

Despite this progress, overall attendance remains slightly below that of similar schools. Rates of persistent absence remain high, particularly among pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Current unverified data shows that attendance for this academic year is slightly below the same period last year. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has continued to improve.

Although leaders provide effective support for individual pupils, they do not evaluate the impact of attendance strategies precisely enough. Pastoral leaders remain too reliant on senior leaders for strategic direction, reducing their capacity to take ownership of planning for further improvement.

R5. Strengthen the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum

Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened the planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. They have taken a sensible approach to ensuring that these skills are developed in a meaningful way in relevant subjects across the curriculum. They have also strengthened the provision for pupils with weaker skills.

Staff across the school have benefited from a range of helpful professional learning activities and opportunities to plan collaboratively with the skills coordinators. This has helped to improve the range and quality of opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts.

Skills coordinators gather a range of first-hand evidence that enables them to identify strengths and areas for improvement in skills provision. However, leaders at all levels do not always evaluate the standards of pupils' specific skills with sufficient precision.

Leaders have prioritised improving pupils' writing skills, and this aspect of the school's work has improved well since the core inspection. Across the curriculum, many pupils organise their writing appropriately and write with suitable clarity. The majority develop their responses appropriately and around half are beginning to use a broader range of vocabulary in their writing. Generally, pupils show a suitable awareness of purpose and audience, adapting their language and tone appropriately to the task. A few pupils write with sophistication and vary their language choices and sentence structures to make their writing more engaging. Despite a revised approach to improving the accuracy of pupils' written work, a minority continue to make basic and repeated errors.

Across the curriculum, many pupils develop and apply their basic reading skills with suitable confidence. Leaders are beginning to plan for meaningful opportunities for pupils

to develop their advanced reading skills in subjects other than English, although this work is at an earlier stage of development. As a result, there are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for them to develop their advanced reading skills. Many pupils listen suitably to their teachers and, when speaking, the majority express their ideas with clarity, using an appropriate range of vocabulary.

Pupils benefit from a suitable range of opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. This includes presenting and analysing a broad range of graphs and performing calculations, for example when they use ratios to calculate ingredients for recipes in technology.

Many pupils have suitable basic number skills and work competently with the four rules of number. They use these skills to convert between fractions, decimals and percentages and when calculating the area of different shapes. A minority of pupils demonstrate sound algebraic skills, creating and rearranging equations successfully. A few pupils continue to make basic errors and struggle to recall important number facts which limits their ability to apply their skills in a range of contexts.

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