



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cantonian High School
Fairwater Road
Fairwater
CF5 3JR**

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by

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

About Cantonian High School

Cantonian High School is an English-medium 11-18 community school maintained by Cardiff local authority. It is located in Fairwater and serves the surrounding area in the west of Cardiff. There are currently 580 pupils on roll. This is an increase from the time of the last inspection but the number in the sixth form has declined from 128 to 57 pupils.

Nearly 38% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average of 16.4%. Around 53% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. Only a very few pupils are fluent in Welsh and speak Welsh at home while close to 13% speak English as an additional language. Around 37% of pupils have additional learning needs, which is higher than the national average of 22.9%. The 7.5% of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average of 2.2%.

The school includes three units supporting pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, those with general learning difficulties and those at risk of permanent exclusion.

The current headteacher was appointed in October 2015. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers, an associate assistant headteacher and a business manager.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Cantonian High School has an inclusive and supportive ethos based on 'The best for each, success for all' that promotes effectively the wellbeing of pupils. Nearly all pupils are developing successfully as ethical and informed citizens, and show strong levels of respect for the beliefs of others.

Many pupils make good progress during their time at the school. In lessons, most make suitable progress and recall prior learning well. A few pupils make very strong progress in their lessons and produce work of a high standard.

In most cases, teachers and teaching assistants develop productive working relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of behaviour and use praise well to motivate pupils to make good progress in their learning and achieve their best. The school's curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences that meet suitably the needs of all pupils. In addition, the school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in activities that enrich their learning.

The headteacher provides determined leadership and has a clear vision of high expectations for all. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school and governors provide useful challenge and support.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' literacy skills, in particular the general standard of pupils' spelling and grammar
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to influence the life and work of the school
- R3 Ensure self-evaluation processes focus on the progress that pupils make and the standards they achieve
- R4 Provide robust financial management

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

In lessons, most pupils make sound progress and recall prior learning well. Many pupils apply their prior learning successfully in different situations. A few pupils make very strong progress in their lessons and produce work of a high standard.

Most pupils listen with respect to teachers and their peers. They listen attentively and follow teachers' instructions well. Most provide suitable verbal responses to teachers' questions and a few give extended, well-developed answers. Many pupils recall and use subject-specific terminology accurately when explaining their thinking. A minority of pupils use more developed vocabulary. For example, in their English lessons, they make accurate use of technical language and appropriate quotations when analysing 'Hawk Roosting' by Ted Hughes. Most pupils participate effectively in group and pair discussions. A few show a high level of confidence in offering opinions and are not afraid to make mistakes. A minority of pupils give only brief responses to questions and lack confidence to speak aloud.

Most pupils read well and with suitable understanding. A majority of pupils summarise and synthesise information confidently. They make use of a range of approaches to extract information, annotate text and identify key points. For instance, in their art lessons, most pupils form an opinion on the work of artists successfully after reading a range of texts. In a majority of cases, pupils do not recognise when they read words incorrectly.

Overall, many pupils write with a good sense of audience and purpose with sound quality of expression. Many use an appropriate range of technical terms and language consistent with the subject content. They write coherently and organise their ideas well, using paragraphs. Over time, many pupils write successfully and develop a good understanding of the conventions of different text types and make appropriate language choices. When writing fiction, many pupils apply their knowledge of the conventions of different genre successfully to create suitable pieces of work. A few do this exceptionally well, for example by writing vivid, imaginative and evocative descriptions of dystopian worlds. However, a minority of pupils do not spell or punctuate accurately enough and a few pupils do not take enough care over presentation of work or their handwriting.

Pupils apply their numeracy skills suitably across the curriculum, for example when considering ratios and comparing amounts of ingredients in food technology lessons and interpreting data from infographics in geography when studying climate change. A majority draw and make relevant conclusions from graphs across subjects.

Most pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills competently to search for information and for word processing, such as producing, editing and improving their work in religious education lessons. Most pupils demonstrate appropriate progress using ICT skills in use of image and websites, for example in collating information on the artists of their choice. Many pupils use basic ICT skills appropriately to create presentations.

Pupils display strong creative skills and originality, for example through their work in rehearsing and performing a short scene in drama. Many pupils approach creative problem-solving tasks with confidence, justifying their responses with clear explanations, for example in creating a mobile phone holder in technology lessons. A minority of pupils develop their analytical and investigative skills well in a range of different contexts. They approach problem-solving tasks with confidence, justifying their responses with clear explanations and making thoughtful connections to other areas of learning such as in business studies when they link branding and packaging of food with healthy eating.

In each of the last four years, and particularly in the last two, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics and in the capped points score has compared favourably with levels in similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils achieving five grades A*-A at GCSE or equivalent declined sharply in 2018 and is well below the average for similar schools. Nevertheless, in the last four years, pupils have mostly made more progress than expected from previous key stages in many indicators.

The performance of pupils in the sixth form varies when compared with levels in similar schools. The percentage that achieved three A*-C grades or equivalent increased significantly in 2018 and is above the average for similar schools for the first time in four years. The percentage that achieve three A*-A grades or equivalent is also above the average for similar schools in 2018 having been below for the three previous years. Performance in the average wider score has been below the average for similar schools for the last two years.

At the end of key stage 4, boys' performance compared with boys in similar schools has been inconsistent over the last four years. In 2018, their performance is below the average for boys in similar schools in the majority of indicators. Over the last four years, girls' performance has compared well with that of girls in similar schools in many indicators.

In general, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals compares well with the average for the same group of pupils in similar schools.

At the end of key stage 4, nearly all pupils remain in education, employment or training. The majority of pupils enter further or higher education after leaving the sixth form.

Many pupils follow a Welsh second language course at GCSE level. A majority of pupils achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh. In Welsh lessons, many pupils use their language skills suitably, speaking with confidence and structuring their sentences correctly to describe their activities. Pupils' use of the Welsh language outside Welsh lessons is limited.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils feel well supported at school and are confident to engage with new ideas and experiences. They arrive promptly for lessons and are ready to learn. Many

sustain concentration well and work purposefully in groups and individually. This helps them to share ideas and develop their thinking usefully. In particular, pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in the 'Access' base, engage positively in their learning tasks. They form worthwhile relationships with adults and participate happily in school-life. For example, they develop their physical skills creatively working with the National Dance Company of Wales.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful of their teachers and their peers. Nearly all pupils feel confident that they can approach an adult if they have a concern. The poor behaviour of a very few pupils causes a few to feel anxious in the school environment.

Nearly all pupils are developing successfully as ethical and informed citizens. They show strong levels of respect for the beliefs of others and discuss their differences maturely. For example, pupils in key stage 3 share purposefully their thoughts on the wrongs of prejudice and discrimination based on age, sex or religion. As a result, pupils understand clearly each other's viewpoints and opinions.

Most pupils understand well how to stay safe when online. They appreciate the importance of eating healthily, having sufficient sleep and taking regular exercise. For example, pupils in Year 8 explain well the positive physical and mental health benefits of exercise, such as dance and gymnastics. A few pupils do not put their understanding into practice well enough, for example in choosing healthy foods and drinks.

Pupil groups, such as the school council, make a limited contribution to the life of the school, although the school council has shared ideas in relation to the improvement of pupil toilets and helped to raise funds to install a defibrillator at the school. However, pupils' ability to influence wider decision-making and help shape their curriculum is not effective enough.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Most teachers and teaching assistants develop effective working relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of behaviour and address the few issues of poor pupil conduct consistently and effectively. Teachers use praise well to motivate pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve their best.

Most teachers plan and deliver sequences of lessons effectively. They build well on previous learning, developing pupils' skills progressively. For example, in Year 7 ICT, teachers improve pupils' understanding of spreadsheets as they utilise existing knowledge to develop advanced skills in sorting and filtering data. Most teachers plan lessons that provide appropriate challenge to pupils, including the more able. They deploy teaching assistants well to support the progress of pupils with additional learning needs. A majority of teachers use questioning effectively to draw out pupils' understanding of concepts and improve their skills. For example, in languages, teachers' questioning develops pupils' knowledge of vocabulary well and challenges pupils to improve their use of key verbs. However, in a few cases, questioning does not encourage pupils to provide extended answers.

In most cases, teachers organise and use resources well to support learning. Their use of examples to model successful work is a particular strength. For example, in Year 10 English, pupils work with the teacher to analyse an extract from a novel focussing on how the author creates a mood of menace. They use what they have learnt to produce their own highly individual and well-written responses. In many cases, lessons move at a pace that allows pupils to develop and embed new skills and knowledge successfully. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers over direct activities. This limits opportunities for pupils to develop wider skills as independent and creative learners.

In most classes, teachers offer pupils clear verbal feedback on what they are doing well and what they need to improve. They use success criteria for achievement or 'level trackers' effectively to provide pupils with an accurate picture of their progress and the next steps in their learning. In many cases, teachers use feedback sheets successfully to indicate to pupils how to improve their skills. These frequently include beneficial examples of excellent practice for pupils to use as models for their own work. In the best cases, teachers provide pupils with valuable time to respond to written feedback and make improvements.

The school's curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences that meet suitably the needs of nearly all pupils. At key stage 3, the curriculum develops pupils' skills and knowledge systematically although work with partner primary schools to plan progression in learning is underdeveloped.

The school's setting arrangements support learning successfully. At key stage 4, it provides pupils with a valuable range of academic and vocational courses. The school works appropriately with local colleges and schools to provide a suitable range of courses in the sixth form. There are beneficial arrangements for the most vulnerable pupils, including additional flexible curriculum pathways, which offer worthwhile opportunities for these pupils to gain a wide range of qualifications.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in activities that enrich their learning. This includes a wide range of worthwhile visits that link effectively with learning in the classroom. For example, following a Year 8 geography visit to a chocolate factory, pupils developed their numeracy skills and understanding of fair trade as part of a cross-curricular research project.

The majority of teachers plan worthwhile opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills across many subject areas. For example, in Year 8 art, pupils use their reading skills to synthesise information from a range of sources and form opinions on the work of artists. Planning for the progressive development of numeracy skills across the curriculum and over time is suitable. Plans to develop pupils' ICT skills across subject areas are at an early stage.

Teachers and pupils use of Welsh apart from in Welsh lessons is limited. Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to enhance their understanding of Welsh heritage and culture, for example through a history trip to visit the memorial to Welsh soldiers in Ypres.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has an inclusive and supportive ethos based on 'The best for each, success for all' that promotes the wellbeing of pupils effectively. It supports all pupils, including vulnerable pupils well, using a wide range of initiatives.

The school has developed a comprehensive tracking system to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. It shares this information suitably with middle leaders who use it appropriately, for example to mentor and coach key stage 4 pupils at risk of underachieving. This has contributed well to maintaining strong outcomes in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, especially for pupils eligible for free school meals.

The school has beneficial strategies to monitor and respond to pupil absence. These include first day contact, mentoring and joint house visits with the educational welfare officer. This has contributed to maintaining a suitable level of attendance over the last four years.

Individual education plans are worthwhile and help staff to meet the needs of pupils effectively. Pupils with additional learning needs are supported well, both through individual and small group interventions, for example emotional literacy, and numeracy groups. The school monitors the achievement of these pupils effectively and tailors suitably provision to meet their needs. The school works effectively with a wide range of external support agencies such as the local authority 'Team around the school' programme that supports beneficially the families of vulnerable pupils and those at risk of disengagement.

The school provides suitable opportunities for parents to support their children's learning, for example, through a computer course teaching parents basic ICT skills and a cookery course for parents with their children.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. It provides a suitable range of lunchtime and after school opportunities to encourage pupils to participate in the arts and in sport. For example, a school production of 'Annie' provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to act, sing and construct sets. In general, opportunities for girls to participate in suitable sporting activities are limited.

Nearly all 'Cantonian reintegration centre (CRC)' pupils undertake valuable physical activities, such as boxercise in a local gymnasium and mindfulness sessions, to support their wellbeing including physical and mental health. In addition, nearly all pupils in the 'Access' base undertake worthwhile physical activities such as cycling and gardening.

The school recognises pupils' individuality and promotes inclusivity successfully. It teaches pupils to respect the values and beliefs of others well, for example through raising awareness of and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils.

The school offers valuable opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through assemblies and external specialist speakers. The personal and social education programme contributes effectively to pupils' understanding of a range of topics such as substance misuse and personal relationships. Pupils with behavioural and social needs are supported well with a range of provision that develops their moral understanding, for example 'red button' drugs awareness project and 'Cuppa with a copper', where pupils can meet and liaise with police officers.

The school uses successfully a range of strategies to promote good behaviour. Most teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and effectively. The school is beginning to canvass pupils' opinions on aspects of school life. However, the structure and opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions, especially on what and how they are taught, are underdeveloped.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides assured leadership. She has a clear vision of high expectations for all, which is shared well amongst staff. The headteacher has introduced relevant systems and processes in order to create a culture of improvement in the school. Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders focus strongly on the school's improvement priorities and leaders have been proactive in addressing issues of underperformance.

Senior leaders hold middle leaders to account well through regular meetings that include a clear focus on standards and the quality of teaching. Nearly all middle leaders understand their roles well and have effective systems and procedures to share good practice throughout the school. For instance, staff contribute to purposeful weekly teaching and learning briefings and collaborate suitably with other schools to share and support each other's practice.

Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. They provide useful challenge and support to the school through the committees and particularly through their 'target monitoring group'. In addition, link governors provide valuable support to departments to help them improve.

Leaders know their school well. They make effective use of a wide range of purposeful and well-planned quality assurance activities to evaluate teaching and assessment practices. Lesson observations, book scrutiny, and learning walks support their evaluations usefully. A strong feature is the way leaders are developing their approach to evaluation to ensure that important areas of concern are subject to a higher level of challenge and support. They plan activities based on a specific focus, for example, when recently evaluating challenge for the more able pupils the school carried out pupil trails and interviewed pupils with their books. Furthermore, the school reviews each quality assurance activity and refines the process in light of its usefulness. However, there is insufficient focus on pupil progress and standards when evaluating lessons, particularly in relation to their skills. As a result, they do not identify specific shortcomings such as the inaccuracy of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar well enough and subsequently the need for teaching to address this.

The school uses findings from self-evaluation effectively to plan for improvements at all levels. They identify clearly the priorities for improvement at each level and review progress regularly. As a result, over the past three years self-evaluation and improvement planning has contributed beneficially to securing improvements in teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning. For example, the recent focus on modelling and challenge has had a positive impact on teachers' planning.

Leaders place strong emphasis on supporting professional practice. Lead practitioners work beneficially with other leaders to plan and co-ordinate professional development support for teachers. There is a coaching programme, as well as weekly teaching and learning briefings and collaborations with other schools. This is improving classroom practice and ensuring consistency in the quality of lessons. A programme of training and coaching for middle leaders ensures that they evaluate processes and practice accurately.

The school has appropriate procedures for managing staff performance. They include suitable targets for student performance, teaching and learning and professional development. These targets are monitored effectively at key points during the school year. This supports the school's improvement priorities well.

Robust procedures to monitor and plan expenditure in line with the financial plan approved by the local authority have reduced the school's budget deficit considerably over the last three years. The headteacher and governors ensure that spending decisions link clearly to the school's priorities. Despite leaders' diligence, there remains a sizable budget deficit.

Leaders use specific grants such as the pupil development grant effectively. This impacts positively on the wellbeing and performance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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