



Report summary for parents and carers on Whitchurch High School

Date of inspection: December 2023

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

Overview

Whitchurch High School is a caring and inclusive community where pupils feel safe, and staff feel valued. Although a large school, staff regard pupils as individuals. The school tailors its care, support and guidance effectively and provides a wide range of courses and pathways that meet the needs of nearly all. Support for pupils' well-being and the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are significant strengths. Pupils who attend the local authority specialist base, Ty Calon, enjoy school, make strong progress and achieve well.

The recently appointed headteacher, and his senior leadership team are leading the school purposefully through a period of change. While retaining the well-established good practice in many areas of the school's work, senior leaders are enhancing and developing structures and processes to ensure that the curriculum and teaching meets the needs and ambitions of pupils. The school is taking a research-informed approach to these developments, ensuring that the Curriculum for Wales is implemented with care and consideration and that teachers are supported to develop their practice with plentiful professional learning opportunities. However, this work, and recently implemented strategies, for example, to plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy, are at an early stage of development.

Where teaching is strong, many pupils make good progress. These teachers have very good subject knowledge and are skilful in planning successful learning experiences. In a minority of instances, although teachers ensure that pupils make reasonable progress to develop the skills they need to achieve their qualifications, they do not always challenge them well enough to extend their thinking or deepen their learning. Leaders are committed to school improvement and are refining arrangements for evaluating the quality of learning and teaching. However, these processes do not always focus sharply enough on the impact of provision on pupil progress.

Senior leaders work with a strong moral purpose and have developed a range of worthwhile strategies to support pupils and families affected by poverty. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the attendance and achievement of these pupils.

The school is working with the local authority to address a few health and safety concerns discussed during the inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Continue to work with the local authority to address the health and safety concerns discussed during the inspection week.
- R2 Sharpen self-evaluation processes and planning for improvement to focus precisely on the areas that require improvement.
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment to meet the needs of all pupils.
- R4 Strengthen the provision for and co-ordination of the progressive development of pupils' skills.

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress. This is the lightest touch of follow-up, as it is not statutory.



School context

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| Name of provider | Whitchurch High School |
| Local authority | Cardiff Council |
| Language of the provider | English |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| Number of pupils on roll | 2450 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 2013 |
| Number in sixth form | 436 |
| Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 21.2%) | 17.4% |
| Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 14.8%) | 6.6% |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home | 0.2% |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language | 3.4% |
| Date of headteacher appointment | 01/09/2023 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | 04/01/2016 |
| Start date of inspection | 04/12/2023 |

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