



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

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

**Connah's Quay High School
Golftyn Lane
Connah's Quay
Flintshire
CH5 4BH**

Date of visit: September 2024

by

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

Outcome of visit

Connah's Quay High 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 senior leaders so that they are equitable and enable them to carry out their roles effectively and be held to account for securing improvement

Since his appointment shortly before the core inspection, the headteacher, supported by the governing body, has taken a range of robust and timely actions to address this recommendation. His bold and decisive approach to the reorganisation of roles and responsibilities at a senior and middle leadership level has consistently prioritised the needs of pupils. Senior leadership roles have been refined thoughtfully and strategically in order to meet the school's priorities and make best use of leaders' skills and experience. These changes have been clearly communicated to all staff, who now have a sound understanding of senior leaders' roles and responsibilities. The senior team work diligently and collaboratively to address the school's improvement priorities.

The headteacher has established a robust and well-understood culture of accountability, where all staff benefit from a careful balance of challenge and support. Strengthened line management arrangements are now consistent and equitable. Performance management processes focus closely on whole-school, departmental and individual priorities.

Middle leaders have benefited from a range of useful internal and external professional learning. This has helped them to understand and carry out their roles more confidently and effectively. Whilst there remains some variability in how consistently they secure improvement, middle leaders' overall impact on the work of the school has developed substantially since the core inspection.

Governors are now fully informed about the work of the school. They play an increasingly important role in holding leaders to account.

Overall, the strengthening of leadership has secured improvement in important aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching, pupils' engagement and progress, and their attendance.

R2. Strengthen processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning

Since the core inspection, the school's processes for evaluating its provision and planning for improvement have been thoroughly revised and strengthened. In

particular, self-evaluation activities now focus much more closely on the impact of provision on pupil outcomes. These changes have been clearly communicated to all staff, who now, in general, have a sound understanding of their role in this aspect of the school's work.

Leaders have benefited from useful professional learning to develop this part of their role. In particular, they are increasingly confident in synthesising a wide range of evidence, including feedback from pupils, in order to identify the specific aspects that require development. As a result of these changes, senior leaders have a secure understanding of the school's specific strengths and areas for improvement. This is helping them to carry out their line management responsibilities more effectively. In general, both pastoral and subject middle leaders have a sound understanding of the main improvement priorities in their areas of responsibility. Whilst there remains some variation in how precisely they identify specific aspects that require improvement, overall their capacity to plan for improvement is notably better than at the time of the core inspection.

Arrangements for self-evaluation, improvement planning, line management, performance management and professional learning are now carefully integrated. This is helping leaders at all levels to focus more closely and coherently on whole-school, departmental and pastoral priorities. These developments have enabled leaders to secure improvement in several important aspects of the school's work, particularly the effectiveness of teaching and pupil engagement.

R3. Improve teaching and assessment in order to challenge and engage all pupils

Since the core inspection, leaders have developed a range of appropriate approaches to improve the impact that teaching has on pupil progress and engagement. Strategies such as 'The CQHS Way', supported by a range of beneficial professional learning opportunities, have established a common understanding of the school's expectations regarding effective classroom practice. As a result, although there remain some shortcomings in a minority of lessons, overall the school has secured suitable improvement in the effectiveness of teaching.

In most cases, teachers have secure subject knowledge and are good language models. They develop positive working relationships with their pupils. In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and establish clear routines to promote positive attitudes to learning. They plan activities that enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding appropriately, and offer them clear explanations and instructions. In the majority of instances, teachers use questioning appropriately to encourage pupils to develop their verbal responses.

In a few particularly effective lessons, teachers plan skilfully with a clear and precise focus on what they want pupils to learn. They model and exemplify work effectively and use probing questions to challenge pupils and deepen their understanding. These teachers monitor pupils' progress closely and use their misconceptions to adapt tasks sensibly and help develop their understanding.

In a minority of cases, teachers' planning does not have a sufficiently clear focus on what they expect pupils to learn. In these lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with

enough challenge. Activities are often overly scaffolded and do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop independence in their learning. As a result, the pace of learning is too slow. In a few lessons, teachers are overly tolerant of limited engagement and do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. This has a negative impact on the progress that pupils make.

Many teachers monitor pupils' progress in lessons suitably, offering helpful verbal feedback where appropriate. A minority provide pupils with suitable written guidance as to how they can improve their work, for example using 'Pitstop' assessments. However, overall, there remains too much variation in how well teachers use feedback to help pupils develop their understanding. Expectations regarding how pupils respond to feedback are not well enough established. As a result, teachers' feedback does not have a consistent impact on pupil progress.

R4. Strengthen provision to improve pupils' attendance, engagement and attitudes to learning

Since the core inspection, the school has taken a variety of well-considered measures to improve pupils' well-being. This has had a positive impact on their attitudes to learning, engagement and rates of attendance.

The pastoral team monitor attendance closely and have developed rigorous procedures to identify those in need of support and to provide beneficial, targeted interventions. As a result, rates of attendance have increased steadily over the last two years. However, the school recognises that levels of persistent absence and the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remain areas that require further improvement.

Strengthened approaches to promoting positive attitudes to learning have had a notably positive impact on pupil engagement. As a result, many pupils demonstrate positive behaviour, behaving well in lessons and around school. They settle quickly to tasks, participate willingly in class discussions and listen attentively to their teacher and other pupils. They collaborate well in pair and group activities. A minority engage enthusiastically in their lessons. A few pupils remain passive, lack resilience and occasionally behave in a way that disrupts the learning of others. However, overall pupil engagement is notably better than at the time of the core inspection.

The pastoral team have a well-developed understanding of individual pupils' needs, and use a range of data well to monitor their well-being. This is helping them to develop a strategic and holistic approach to planning provision to support pupils' engagement.

The school has taken appropriate action to cater more effectively for pupils at risk of disengagement. It has reduced substantially the number of pupils who previously only attended school on a part-time basis. An enhanced range of options at Key Stage 4, for example a qualification in hair and beauty, as well as tailored support, is starting to secure better outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

R5. Strengthen provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and Welsh, and their digital skills

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened its approach to the development of pupils' skills appropriately. Skills coordinators have considered carefully how subjects across the curriculum contribute to the development of pupils' skills. They have worked collaboratively with key departments to plan purposeful activities that enrich and support pupils' progress within subject areas. For example, the numeracy co-ordinator has developed a series of valuable 'How to' resources to help staff and pupils develop their understanding of how to use and interpret graphs. Alongside beneficial professional learning opportunities, these resources have supported staff to plan activities that help pupils to use their skills appropriately in relevant contexts. The school has also strengthened its processes to identify and support pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. However, work to ensure that the provision for skills promotes progression and provides consistently appropriate challenge for all pupils remains at an early stage of development.

The school has developed its provision to promote pupils' understanding of Welsh language, culture, identity and heritage suitably. Subjects across the curriculum are increasingly including opportunities to study the local area and Wales in their schemes of learning. In addition, the school has increased the time allocated for pupils to study Welsh and has addressed the shortcomings in access to Welsh provision identified in the core inspection. As a result, last year most pupils were entered for an appropriate qualification in Welsh.

Strengthened self-evaluation processes have enabled leaders to gain an accurate and realistic view of progress towards addressing this recommendation. This is helping them to identify more precisely which aspects need improvement and plan strategically to address them. The recent appointment of lead practitioners in core subjects to lead on skills provision has strengthened the school's capacity to develop this aspect, although it is too early to see the impact of this approach.

The school has made strong progress in the development of pupils' oracy skills across the curriculum. The use of strategies such as 'turn to talk' and 'say it again, say it better' is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to contribute to discussion work and explain their ideas clearly, using an appropriately wide vocabulary. It has also made suitable progress in improving pupils' numeracy and digital skills. However, although a few subject areas such as history have developed beneficial activities to support pupils' extended writing, overall, provision to develop reading and writing skills remains at an early stage of development. In addition, there is still too much variation in how effectively teachers' feedback supports pupils to improve the technical accuracy of their writing.