



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Maesteg School
Ffordd Dysgu
Maesteg
CF34 OLQ**

Date of inspection: November 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement 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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Context

Maesteg School is an 11 to 18 English-medium mixed comprehensive school to the north of Bridgend. Pupils attend the school from the Llynfi valley. The pupil population has fallen slightly since the time of the last inspection. There are currently 1,094 pupils on roll, including 179 in the sixth form.

Since the last inspection, the school has moved from its former two-site premises to a new school building on one site, which opened in 2008.

A total of 26.35% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above the national average of 17.4% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 55% of the pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

Pupils at the school represent the full range of ability. In line with local authority policy, there are no pupils with a statement of educational need. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils have a special educational need. A very small number have English as an additional language. There are very few pupils who speak Welsh at home. Ninety-nine per cent of pupils are from a White British ethnic background.

The headteacher joined the school in May 2000. The deputy headteacher has been in post for eight years and the three assistant heads for five years.

The individual school budget per pupil for Maesteg School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,166 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the secondary schools in Bridgend is £4,709 and the minimum is £3,785. Maesteg School is sixth out of the 11 secondary schools in Bridgend in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Maesteg School is judged to be a good school because:

- performance in key stage 4 is above expectations and compares favourably with that of similar schools;
- pupils make better than expected progress in their time in the school;
- there are very good working relationships between pupils and staff;
- pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes towards their learning;
- the care and support for pupils are excellent; and
- the school is very successful in making sure pupils get the help they need to make progress.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the improvement of standards, which has been successfully communicated to staff, pupils, parents and the wider school community;
- the governors provide a good sense of direction for the school's work and are effective critical friends;
- senior and middle leaders work closely together to monitor and evaluate the work of all aspects of school life;
- pupils have a positive and significant influence on all aspects of life within the school; and
- a consistent focus on developing pupil wellbeing has resulted in improvements in many aspects of the school's work since the last inspection, including improved outcomes for learners.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in English, particularly in key stage 3;
- R2 improve consistency in teaching, marking and assessment;
- R3 improve reports to parents; and
- R4 improve the consistency of departmental self-evaluation reports and improvement plans.

What happens next?

Excellent practice

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The school's performance is steadily improving in nearly all indicators at key stage 3 and key stage 4. Performance is currently adequate overall in key stage 3, but good in key stage 4.

In key stage 3, performance in English has placed the school in the lower half of similar schools for the past three years. Also in 2012, performance in the core subject indicator and in English was slightly below the average performance of similar schools. However, performance in both these indicators was slightly above expected levels.

In 2012, both science and mathematics in key stage 3 were above the average performance of similar schools and placed the school in the top quarter of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Performance at level 6 and above is good in comparison with that of similar schools in mathematics. Progress by pupils from the previous key stage is adequate in nearly all indicators. It is good in mathematics.

At key stage 4, there has been a sustained and steady trend of improvement in most indicators. Over the past three years, performance in those indicators that include English and mathematics has been above the average on nearly all occasions compared with that of similar schools. Performance in the indicators that include a wide range of qualifications has been consistently above the average of similar schools. Pupils make good progress from the previous key stages.

In the separate core subjects in key stage 4, mathematics and science both show an upward trend. However, even though for the past two years English performance has been above the family average, there has been a downward trend over three years.

Over the last two years, all pupils left school with a qualification and a high proportion continued to full-time education after 16. Nearly all pupils over the past three years have achieved the level 1 threshold by the end of full-time education at 16. None of the pupils who left school at 16 are reported as being not in education, employment and training.

In the sixth form, students' performance over three years compares well with similar schools and national averages. Pupils make good progress in their studies.

In key stage 3, boys perform less well than girls in English and in the core subject indicator. The difference in performance between boys and girls is greater than in similar schools and nationally. In key stage 4, boys consistently perform less well in many indicators, although they make the expected progress from the previous key stages. Less able boys make better than expected progress.

The gap in performance of pupils entitled to free school meals and those who are not has narrowed over the past three years. The performance of pupils entitled to free school meals has varied in all indicators at key stage 3 and key stage 4, but there is a general trend of improvement.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve well, often above expectations.

In lessons and over time most pupils make good or better progress in their learning. They have good recall of knowledge and apply this well to new learning. They have very good thinking and reasoning skills.

The school has prioritised the development of speaking and this is having a beneficial impact. Most pupils are confident speakers and answer questions in detail, using appropriate and subject-specific vocabulary. The quality of reading and written work is appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities. Most pupils read confidently and have effective strategies for tackling unfamiliar words. Most written work is well presented and pupils take care with their spelling, punctuation and grammar. The most able produce very good extended written work. Most pupils are effective in improving their own learning and they work well on their own, in pairs and in groups.

Standards in Welsh second language are good. At key stage 3, performance has improved and it has been in the top half of similar schools for the past two years. At key stage 4, the number of pupils achieving level 2 is high. In 2012, a fifth of the cohort were entered for the full course and all achieved the qualification. Around half of the cohort was entered for the short course and all achieved the qualification.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Pupils feel safe and very well cared for in school. They respond well to an outstanding level of personal support. Nearly all feel that they have someone to talk to if they need help. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to make progress. This is having an exceptional impact on wellbeing and standards.

Many pupils have a good understanding of how they can lead a healthy lifestyle and participate in a very wide range of sporting and other physical activities. Nearly all arrive punctually for lessons and behave very well in class and around the school. Nearly all pupils are polite and helpful, and work well with others. Improvement has been made in attendance and is now the same as in similar schools. This continues to be a whole-school priority with challenging targets.

Pupils make a positive and significant contribution, which influences all aspects of life within the school. This is a very strong feature. The school council participates in a wide range of issues and influences decisions about aspects of school life. For example, council members have successfully raised awareness of sustainability issues and contribute to the evaluation of teaching and learning.

Many pupils participate in a wide range of community activities, including fund-raising, enterprise tasks and many cultural activities. Many pupils develop appropriate social and life skills through both the curriculum and by participating in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils support each other extremely well through a range of initiatives including peer mediation and sports ambassadors.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that engages the interests of all pupils and meets their needs and aspirations. The key stage 3 curriculum builds well on pupils' experiences in key stage 2. In key stage 4 the school offers a good range of general and vocational courses, including successful provision for reducing the number of pupils leaving with no qualifications. In the sixth form, learners follow a wide variety of courses, either at the school itself or at partner schools and the local further education college.

There are effective arrangements for learners to develop the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across all their subjects. Many gain appropriate qualifications in these areas. As well as developing literacy in the curriculum there are a range of worthwhile interventions to help pupils improve their speaking, reading and writing.

There is a good variety of extra-curricular activities. They provide a range of extension experiences including drama, sport and musical activities.

Arrangements for developing education about sustainable development and developing an understanding of global issues are appropriate. Sustainable development is a key focus for the school council. It has raised awareness of the need to recycle and has a useful arrangement with a local firm, to whom the school sells its waste paper and plastic.

Provision for Welsh enables pupils to make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Pupils' understanding of Welsh culture and traditions is developed effectively through a range of subjects and extra-curricular activities, including a Welsh Club and visits with a focus on Welsh language and culture.

Teaching: Good

In nearly all lessons there are very good relationships between teacher and pupils and this leads to a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons.

In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils. In these lessons effective planning means that all pupils are able to improve their own learning and make good progress. Well-designed and executed learning activities sustain pupil interest throughout the lesson. Pupils are challenged to think for themselves and work collaboratively with others.

In these effective lessons, very good arrangements are made to develop pupils' language and subject skills. There is a clear focus on improving literacy and, in particular, the school priority of speaking. There is skilful questioning that probes and extends knowledge and understanding. In a few of the most successful lessons, there is excellent use of new technology to support learning. For example, work is photographed and shared using email.

In a few lessons teaching is less effective. In these lessons, the pace is slow and there is a lack of challenge. Teaching does not meet the needs of all learners because the tasks given or the level of support by the teacher are not adapted for different abilities. There is also too much direction by the teacher and not enough variety of learning activities. In a very few instances pupils are given very undemanding tasks such as copying.

Nearly all teachers mark work regularly. In the majority of cases, comments are informative and offer helpful suggestions to improve. However, there is inconsistency across subject areas, and a minority of comments do not provide pupils with enough guidance on next steps in learning. In the majority of lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to assess progress against success criteria.

The school has recently refined its system for tracking pupils' progress and teachers use this effectively to identify underachievement. Most pupils know their predicted and current levels and grades. Reports to parents include useful information on attendance, behaviour and endeavour. However, reports vary too much in quality and those provided in key stage 3 lack key information on pupil outcomes.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The ways in which the school removes barriers to learning are outstanding. The impact that the pastoral system makes on attendance, behaviour and performance is extensive. The school has been particularly successful in reducing the number leaving without qualifications and increasing the numbers staying in education or training.

The school makes very good provision for promoting pupils' health and wellbeing within a very caring and supportive environment that encourages a positive attitude to school. It uses an extensive range of innovative intervention strategies, which are responsive to a wide range of pupils' needs. A particular strength is the range of strategies for pupils with personal and emotional needs. The school has made good use of surveys with pupils and initiatives such as 'Helping Hands' to identify specific needs. The school ensures that excellent provision meets these needs.

The school effectively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers and learning coaches give valuable advice to pupils when making option choices at key stage 4 and at post-16. The school has established effective transition arrangements to support pupils at all key stages.

The school provides very good guidance to pupils and works very well, in partnership with a range of support agencies and specialist services. These partnerships help to make sure that pupils receive support that is appropriate to their needs. In many cases it helps pupils to progress and improve their attitudes to learning.

The support for pupils with additional learning needs is extensive and ensures that pupils can succeed and move on to the next stage in learning. Pupils' individual educational plans identify appropriate targets, leading to improvement and progress.

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

Learning environment: Excellent

The school is cohesive, safe and highly inclusive. The school motto, 'The Best Education is Learning to Live', is successfully promoted and is evident in the whole culture of the school. The school is particularly successful in involving the local community in its life and work.

The interior of the building is bright and spacious, and displays are of a very high quality. The school buildings and grounds are well maintained and safe. The provision of information and communication technology resources is of a particularly high standard. Sporting facilities are outstanding. Resources are well-matched to learning needs. The school environment contributes to a very positive learning atmosphere.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the improvement of standards, which has been successfully communicated to staff and pupils. This has had a significantly positive effect on the promotion of shared values and high expectations, which have encouraged pupils to do their best. This vision is also very well communicated with parents and the wider school community.

There is a coherent structure of meetings, which have a valuable focus on school performance and lead to relevant action points. The roles and responsibilities of senior staff are suitably defined and there is a broadly appropriate balance between them. They are suitably supported by an extended leadership team.

Senior leaders and middle leaders have put into place structures that have led to school improvement. This has resulted in greater accountability for managerial responsibilities and an increasing trend in performance.

The performance of staff is well managed and underperformance is successfully challenged. These procedures have been significant contributory factors in recent improvements, for example in mathematics.

Leaders and managers make good use of data to set realistic and challenging targets and monitor progress against them.

The school takes appropriate account of national priorities, especially in relation to reducing social exclusion and extending the curriculum for 14 to 19 learners in collaboration with other local providers. Leaders and managers comprehensively plan to raise levels of pupils' literacy skills.

Governors have a good understanding of their roles and are suitably informed about the school's performance. They use this information well and hold the school to account appropriately. Governors carry out their work through a comprehensive range of committees and have established beneficial links with subject areas in the school. Together they provide a good sense of direction for the school's work and are effective critical friends.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation processes are extensive. Senior and middle leaders work closely together to monitor and evaluate the work of all aspects of school life. A consistent focus on developing pupil wellbeing has resulted in improvements in many aspects of the school's work since the last inspection, including improved outcomes for learners.

The whole-school self-evaluation report is evaluative and draws on first-hand evidence from lesson observations, pupil and parental surveys and scrutiny of pupils' work. Faculty self-evaluation reports are generally of good quality and link well into whole school self-evaluation. External consultants are used well to provide further useful evaluation of the school's work.

Suitable whole-school priorities are identified from the self-evaluation processes. Faculty improvement plans are based on the outcomes of self-evaluation and link well to the whole school development plan. However, they do not always set out clear timeframes for action points or contain quantifiable targets.

Continuous professional development activities support staff well. They are appropriately linked to performance-management targets as well as faculty improvement plans. Peer observation is used appropriately to provide additional professional development, and allows teachers and learning support staff to share good practice. In addition, several middle leaders have recently gained suitable experience by working as part of an extended senior leadership team.

The school has a number of internal and external working groups that focus on suitable areas such as literacy skill development and assessment for learning in physical education and school sport.

Partnership working: Good

The school involve parents successfully in supporting their children's wellbeing and progress. The school runs a beneficial range of parents' classes, such as 'Basic IT', Welsh and 'Keeping up with My Child in Maths'. These are well attended and popular with parents.

The school's partnership with a broad range of agencies, including the local authority and social services, is an effective feature that helps support more vulnerable pupils. These links help promote inclusion and engagement in learning.

An effective partnership with other secondary schools, the local further education college and business helps deliver the requirements of Learning Pathways 14-19.

The relationships with cluster primary schools are well developed and contribute to the effective transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7. These help pupils to settle quickly in Year 7. Teachers regularly meet with primary colleagues to agree on standards and help ensure that their work builds upon the topics covered in the primary school.

In partnership with higher education institutions, the school plays a full part in training prospective teachers.

Resource management: Good

The school is appropriately staffed to teach the curriculum and teachers are effectively deployed to make best use of their time, expertise and experience. Teachers make worthwhile use of planning, preparation and assessment time.

Leaders and managers have a consistently good understanding of the costs of projects and activities. The headteacher and governing body clearly identify priorities for development and work together well to allocate funds. They monitor spending closely and keep them under review.

There are systematic arrangements to monitor the budget. The school successfully plans to carry a prudent contingency.

In view of the overall judgement of standards, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Performance at key stage 3 has fluctuated over the past three years, but the trend has generally been one of improvement. In 2012, performance in the core subject indicator was above expectations, but it was slightly below family and Wales averages and took the school from the second to the third quarter of schools based on proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In 2012, performance at level 5 and above in English was just below the family average and below the Wales average. English performance has placed the school in the third quarter of similar schools for the past three years. Performance in mathematics has been strong for the past two years, being well above family and Wales averages, and placing the school in the top quarter of similar schools. Science performance in 2012 was above family and Wales averages. Performance at level 6 and above in all three core subjects was similar to the average for the family of schools.

Overall, by the end of key stage 3, pupils make adequate progress from the previous key stage in the core subject indicator, English and science. Progress in mathematics has been better than the average for similar schools.

Performance at key stage 4 in the main indicators has improved over the past three years. Performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics placed the school in the top half of similar schools in two of the last two years. Performance in the level 2 threshold has placed the school in the top half for each of the last three years. Performance in the level 1 threshold has placed the school in the top quarter for each of the last three years. Performance in the core subject indicator has placed the school in the top quarter for two of the last three years. Attainment in all these indicators in 2012 placed the school in the top half of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has fluctuated, but the overall trend is one of improvement. In 2009, it placed the school in the third quarter of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, and the school moved to the second quarter in 2012. Performance in 2012 was well above expectations. Performance in the level 2 threshold, the core subject indicator and the capped points score were all above family averages and close to or above the Wales averages.

Performance in the separate core subjects at key stage 4 has fluctuated, but, apart from in English, shows a trend of improvement. English performance fell slightly in 2012 and, even though it remained above the family average, performance has placed the school in the third quarter of similar schools for the past three years. Mathematics has shown the greatest improvement. In 2011, performance was below the family average and placed the school in the bottom quarter of similar schools. This improved in 2012 to above the family average, and taking the school to the second quarter of similar schools. Science performance has been consistently well above family and Wales averages, and has placed the school in the top quarter of similar schools for the past two years.

Over the past three years, pupils in key stage 4 have made good overall progress from key stage 2 and key stage 3 in all the main indicators. The school is in the top half of similar schools in terms of the progress made by its pupils.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaire

Estyn received responses from 265 pupils, selected at random from across the age range. The responses of the pupils from Maesteg School were generally more positive than those of pupils from other secondary schools.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school.

Most say that:

- they have enough books and equipment;
- there are plenty of opportunities to get regular exercise;
- they are doing well;
- staff help them to learn and make progress;
- the school encourages them to take on responsibility;
- they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns;
- staff treat them with respect; and
- the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds.

Many pupils:

- consider that the school deals well with bullying;
- say that the school teaches them how to be healthy;
- believe that homework helps them to understand and improve their work; and
- say that staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect.

A majority of pupils:

- say that pupils behave well and they can get on with their work; and
- feel that the school takes account of their views.

Many pupils in key stage 4 say that they received good advice when choosing their courses and most consider that they are well prepared for further education or employment. Many pupils in the sixth form say that they were given good advice when choosing courses in the sixth form.

Parent questionnaire

Estyn received 85 responses to the parent questionnaire. Parents gave a positive or very positive response to most questions, and their views are generally more positive than parents of pupils in other secondary schools.

All parents consider that their child is making good progress.

Nearly all parents:

- are satisfied with the school and say that their children are safe and like the school;
- consider that their children were helped to settle in well when they started school;
- believe that the staff have high expectations of pupils, that teaching is good and that staff expectations are high; and
- believe that the school helps their child to be mature and take responsibility.

Most parents consider that:

- the school is well run;
- staff treat children fairly and with respect;
- there is a good range of activities available to their child;
- their children are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- homework builds on what their child learns in school; and
- they are kept informed about their child's progress.

Most parents are comfortable about approaching the school to discuss matters about their child's education and wellbeing, and know the procedure for making a complaint.

Many parents say that:

- pupils behave well in school; and
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next stage in education, training or employment.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sue Halliwell	Reporting Inspector
Rhian Wyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Peter Harris	Team Inspector
David Ivor Hughes	Team Inspector
Robert Davies	Team Inspector
Stephen John Walters	Lay Inspector
Allison Llewellyn Yarrow	Peer Inspector
Marian Jarvis	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Families of schools	These have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics.
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at the age of 16 or at the age of 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 16.
All-Wales Core Data sets	Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.