



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

A report on

**Cardiff West Community High School
Michaelston Road
Cardiff
CF5 4SX**

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by

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

About Cardiff West Community High School

Cardiff West Community High School is an English-medium 11 to 18 school, maintained by Cardiff local authority. The school opened as Cardiff West Community High School in 2017 following the closure of Glyn Derw and Michaelston comprehensive schools. There are currently 613 pupils on roll with 96 in the sixth form.

The school serves the Ely area of Cardiff. Over 45% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than the national average of 16.4% for secondary schools. Over four-fifths of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales.

The predominant language of the pupils is English and approximately 13% of the school's pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 15% of pupils receive support for English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh fluently.

Around 37% of pupils have special educational needs compared to 22.9% nationally and 2.7% of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is above the national average of 2.2%.

The headteacher was appointed in 2017. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, one deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and a business manager. They have been in post since 2017.

The school will move into a new building on a different site in Spring 2019.

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

Since it opened in September 2017 senior leaders and staff have worked effectively to build trust within the community and engage parents to help ensure that pupils attend regularly, behave well and thrive. Aspects of provision have been strengthened, in particular work to broaden the curriculum and enrichment activities to ensure that pupils regardless of their background have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences. These developments are contributing to improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal development. However, leadership at all levels has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality and consistency of teaching, the development of pupils' skills and the standards they achieve.

Most teachers establish positive and supportive working relationships with pupils. This is building pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. The school's 'Behaviour for Learning' policy is having a positive impact on school culture, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour both in lessons and around the school.

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

Recommendations

R1 Raise standards

R2 Improve behaviour and attendance

R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

R4 Improve the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum

R5 Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership at all levels

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the standard of pupils' work has improved over the short period that the school has been open. The work that the school has done to improve pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, to improve pupils' readiness to learn and to ensure that the progress of pupils is carefully monitored has had a positive impact.

Many pupils listen carefully to the teacher and each other when working in pairs and small groups. A majority are eager to share their ideas, they build suitably on those of others, and make successful use of subject specific vocabulary in discussion. For example, Year 11 pupils show sensitivity to context and audience when giving their views about the issue of designer babies and Year 9 pupils show maturity when discussing peer pressure and its role in unhealthy lifestyle choices. A minority are somewhat reluctant or hesitant to offer their views without prompting.

Many pupils read and understand simple texts independently, such as a piece on the impact of global warming on habitats in science. They can then express informed opinions about the content. A majority of pupils make effective use of a range of reading strategies such as highlighting to find information and key ideas, and they infer meaning and intention successfully. A minority of pupils read aloud with fluency and expression. The majority are more hesitant and lack confidence.

A majority of pupils have a sound understanding of basic literary conventions and how language is used to create effect. A minority of pupils use this understanding well and write effectively, for example Year 9 pupils writing news articles expressing concern about homelessness. They develop their arguments carefully based on research, and structure well with an appropriate introduction, focus on key issues and suitable conclusion. However, the quality of the writing of a majority of pupils is marred by clumsy expression and inaccurate use of capital letters, full stops and commas.

From their individual starting points, the majority of pupils develop secure number skills in mathematics lessons. For example, younger pupils make sensible estimations by rounding whole numbers and decimals, and older pupils describe correctly what happens at a given point on a journey graph. The majority of pupils apply their numeracy skills suitably to different contexts and subjects when they have the opportunity to do so. This includes using their data skills assuredly in humanities to draw accurate climate graphs and to give the correct co-ordinates for maps and grids.

A minority of pupils do not have secure number skills and, in particular, lack confidence in making written and mental calculations. Although the majority of pupils know how to estimate accurately, they do not routinely apply this method in different contexts to check if their work is correct or not.

Many pupils make sound use of information communication technology (ICT) for research and to produce reports. For example, pupils in Year 11 produce questionnaires to investigate pupils' food preferences. There is limited use of ICT by pupils for other purposes.

Around half of pupils have sound pronunciation when speaking Welsh. However, a minority of pupils lack the confidence to speak Welsh in front of their peers. The most able pupils can skim and scan to retrieve and infer information from simple reading texts in Welsh. A majority of pupils can write effectively in Welsh where they can vary their sentence starters, their use of positive and negative phrases and their command of a range of vocabulary.

At the end of key stage 4, many pupils are entered for GCSE Welsh. Around half of these achieve a level 2 qualification. However, across the school, pupils' use of the Welsh language outside of Welsh lessons is limited.

In 2018, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics is broadly in line with that in similar schools. Performance in the capped points score is below the average for similar schools. No pupil achieved five GCSE or equivalent grades at A*-A in 2018.

At key stage 4, in 2018, the performance of boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals in all indicators is below the average for these groups in similar schools. However, the performance of girls is only just below the average for girls in similar schools. Pupils with additional learning needs make sound progress in improving their reading and numeracy skills as a result of the intervention support they receive.

In 2018 no sixth form pupil achieved three A*-A grades. Performance in the other key indicators well below the average for similar schools. The school's sixth form in 2018 was very small.

In 2018 no pupil finished Year 11 without a recognised qualification.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils feel safe and secure in school and say that the school is effective in dealing with any instances of bullying. Many believe that they are treated with fairness and respect by teachers and that the school listens to their views and opinions. A few play an active role in the life and development of the school through the work of year councils, for example in helping to design the new uniform and raising money for charity. Most pupils have a good understanding of how the school can support them and value the new system of rewards and consequences.

Many pupils behave appropriately in and around the school. They are polite and courteous towards others. Many demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and contribute constructively in class activities and work well in small groups. For example, in history, pupils discuss maturely the factors that led to the fall of the Weimar Republic in Germany. However, a minority of pupils behave inappropriately in lessons. They are slow to settle, lose concentration and disrupt the learning of others. A few pupils are boisterous and lack concentration and resilience when experiencing difficulties with certain learning activities.

Since the school opened punctuality has improved and many arrive promptly to class and settle quickly. However, a few are slow to move between lessons and are late arriving. Attendance of all groups of pupils has improved but remains below the average for similar schools. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced significantly but is still above the average for similar schools.

Many pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles and show an awareness of the importance of exercise and a balanced diet. A majority of pupils participate in a range of worthwhile extra-curricular activities such as creative arts events, the school musical production, rugby, Cardiff Race for Life and the free running club. A minority of pupils take part in a beneficial range of experiences that enhance their personal and social development and strengthen links with the local community. These include pupils' involvement in the Cardiff Youth Council, and visiting Ely Court Care Home and Ely and Caerau Children's Centre.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Across the school, the quality of teaching and learning experiences overall engages pupils suitably. Many aspects of the curriculum are sound, but the provision for skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped, and the quality of teaching and assessment varies too much.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and they establish positive and supportive working relationships with pupils. This helps to build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.

A majority of teachers plan lessons appropriately to build on pupils' prior knowledge, and they use resources that stimulate pupils' learning well. In the majority of lessons there is a suitable pace to the learning and a wide range of approaches and activities that match pupils' abilities successfully. Where present, most teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting the progress of pupils with additional learning needs.

In a few particularly effective lessons, teachers are extremely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject. They use both attributes skilfully to target their questioning and ensure that each pupil is supported according to their individual needs. They also encourage pupils to reason and explain their answers fully, referencing previous work, to deepen their understanding. For example in history, teachers use probing questioning to develop pupils' understanding of issues leading to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party, and in science to encourage pupils to explain carefully the differences between dominant and recessive genes.

A minority of learning activities do not challenge or support pupils of differing abilities well enough. Teachers do not plan suitably for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills or, when appropriate, pupils' numeracy skills. In these lessons, pupils do not have opportunities to explore, share and develop their ideas and understanding at a suitable level. Consequently, these pupils are either insufficiently stretched or find tasks too difficult, and a minority lose concentration and they distract themselves and their peers.

Many teachers provide beneficial oral feedback to pupils. In a few lessons teachers' classroom routines for evaluating pupils' understanding are particularly effective. These teachers monitor pupils' progress skilfully and use a range of strategies to provide timely intervention individually, in small groups or whole-class.

Teachers' feedback on pupils' work in a few subjects is valuable in helping pupils to understand precisely how well they are doing and the concepts and skills that they need to improve. In these subjects, strategies include thorough analysis of key tasks

coupled with helpful supplementary activities to reinforce areas that need to be developed further. These strategies support pupils to make strong progress. However, across the school there is too much inconsistency in the effectiveness of assessment. In many cases, written feedback is too superficial and does not identify specific and relevant areas to help pupils to make suitable improvements to their work. Overall, only a few teachers ensure that pupils respond appropriately to their comments, for example by refining and improving written work.

The school's curriculum builds suitably on pupils' learning from previous key stages. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is an appropriate range of option choices, including vocational courses, that meets the needs of pupils well. At key stage 3, the curriculum give pupils the opportunity to learn in real life contexts. For example, pupils in Year 7 learn about biodiversity by visiting St Fagan's to look at the natural woodland habitat and the impact of urbanisation. The school also makes agile use of partnership working to help adapt its curriculum to meet the individual needs of vulnerable pupils. Beneficial external links include successful engagement with 'Cardiff Creative Educational Partnership'. This programme enables pupils to take part in cultural experiences and explore careers available within Cardiff's creative economy. Partner organisations in this programme include BBC Wales, Welsh National Opera and local universities.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in suitable curriculum enrichment activities. These include, for example, participation in the 'Voice Partnership' with Wales Millennium Centre and with the Caer Heritage project. High levels of participation in these activities make a strong contribution to many pupils' personal development.

The school has suitable provision to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of those pupils who have the greatest difficulties in these areas. For example, there is an effective intervention programme, which has enabled many of these pupils to make strong progress in developing these skills. There is also a consistent approach between the school and most of its partner primary schools to improve the standard of reading of pupils who are less confident readers. However, the school's current arrangements for the progressive development of pupils' skills in subjects across the curriculum are limited. Teachers do not routinely plan worthwhile and progressive opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy or ICT skills in meaningful and appropriate contexts in individual subjects.

In 2018, many pupils were entered for a Welsh GCSE qualification. At key stage 3, a range of events, such as the Eisteddfod, help pupils to learn about Welsh music and local heritage to develop well their understanding of Welsh culture and traditions. However, pupils have few opportunities to use Welsh outside of Welsh lessons.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Within a relatively short space of time, the school has established a strong sense of unity, purpose and commitment to supporting the wellbeing of its pupils. Senior leaders and staff have worked hard to build trust within the community and engage parents successfully to help ensure that pupils attend regularly, behave well and thrive. Attendance at parents' evenings has improved significantly. A recent forum run by the school to showcase support available to parents of children with additional learning needs in the locality was well attended.

The school tracks attendance systematically to identify and support those pupils who cause concern. There is a particular focus on specific groups such as boys and those eligible for free school meals. Staff follow up robustly with parents where poor attendance persists. Although attendance has risen, current strategies have not had enough impact on improving the attendance of a few pupils.

The new 'Behaviour for Learning' policy is having a positive impact on school culture, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour both in lessons and around the school. It is well-understood by pupils and staff, who appreciate the clarity and fairness of rewards and consequences. Nevertheless, a minority of pupils choose not to behave appropriately, and disrupt their own learning and that of others. The school has introduced useful strategies, which are helping to reduce the impact of incidents of poor behaviour.

The school has a suitable tracking system to monitor the progress made by individuals and specific groups of pupils. This provides useful information for staff to identify those who are underperforming and to implement appropriate interventions to support their learning.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs appropriately. Senior leaders identify and plan effective support to enable these pupils to attend school regularly and access suitable learning pathways. Pupils have useful individual development plans with information about their strengths and the support they require in lessons, although their use by all staff is inconsistent. The school has recently created small nurture classes for pupils with diverse needs in Years 7 -10 to provide them with the specific support and social skills they require to make progress. It is too early to determine the impact of this approach on these pupils.

The school supports pupils with emotional and social needs well. Newly-appointed welfare and attendance officers, attached to each year group, play a vital role in helping pupils and their families to improve attendance and behaviour and to support the development of pupils' self-esteem and wellbeing. The school accesses valuable support from a wide range of professional agencies to provide guidance to pupils.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. It promotes the importance of healthy lifestyle choices suitably in lessons and in a range of extra-curricular activities. Most pupils feel that they are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. For example, in personal and social education (PSE) and physical education, they learn about the importance of exercise.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well by the curriculum, assemblies, and extra-curricular visits. A comprehensive PSE programme helps pupils acquire an understanding of relevant topics such as active citizenship, respect and tolerance of different faiths and backgrounds, health and emotional wellbeing and taking responsibility for their own learning.

There is a strong focus on developing and equipping pupils for their future, which is reflected in the school motto 'Create Your World'. For example, Year 7 pupils have beneficial opportunities to visit local further and higher education institutes as part of their 'Ambition Project' to help raise their aspirations. Decision-making and pupil voice are also an integral part of school life. For example, pupils have been

consulted about changes to the behaviour policy, new uniform and plans for the new school building. School council members feel that their views are valued and they can make a difference to the school.

The school plans for a daily act of collective worship in assemblies and in form tutor time. However, this does not take place consistently across the school in a manner that expects or allows all pupils to develop their spirituality and engage suitably in reflection.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher, working closely with the governing body and senior leaders, has established and communicated successfully a clear vision and ambitious aims for the school. These aims focus aptly on improving the quality of provision to secure better outcomes for pupils and to enhance their life chances. Leaders have made early progress in strengthening provision and this is contributing to improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning. However, leadership at all levels has not had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, the development of their skills and the standards they achieve.

Leaders and staff promote the school's core values of ambition, resilience and trust effectively in their day-to-day work. This approach contributes positively to the strong ethos and team-working across the school, and to the drive towards improvement.

The school operates largely efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Senior leaders provide powerful role models for staff and pupils and have high expectations for behaviour and learning. Most staff at all levels have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and the majority fulfil these to a high standard.

Line management arrangements are generally robust and focus primarily on improving pupils' outcomes. Many leaders hold staff to account for their areas of responsibility. Overall, there is too much variation in the extent to which middle leaders fulfil their role to improve the quality of behaviour, learning, teaching and assessment.

The school has developed valuable strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders and organisations for the benefit of its pupils. For example, the school's working relationships with partner primary schools and local universities help considerably with the transition process and to raise aspirations.

The governing body provides effective oversight of the school's work. It has a well-organised structure of committees, and governors have a secure understanding about all aspects of the school's performance. This knowledge enables the governing body to fulfil its role as a critical friend particularly well, balancing both its challenge and support roles skilfully. Together with the headteacher and senior leaders, the governing body sets out a clear strategic direction for the school.

The school has suitable arrangements to monitor all aspects of its work. There is a systematic programme of quality assurance activities that include departmental

reviews, analyses of data, frequent progress checks and scrutiny of pupils' work. Lesson observations provide useful information about aspects of the quality of teaching and attitudes to learning but do not focus sharply enough on the impact of provision on pupils' progress. Senior leaders consult thoroughly with staff to review specific areas of provision such as the application and effectiveness of the behaviour for learning policy. Overall, these activities help leaders to acquire a secure understanding of the school's strengths as well as those areas that require improvement.

The school development plan sets out clear overarching priorities to raise standards, to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning, and to engage successfully with parents and the local community. The school is implementing a broad range of initiatives to address these priorities and related objectives with generally measurable success criteria. Subject area plans include relevant actions to support whole-school priorities as well as specific departmental areas for improvement. However, in a few cases, success criteria are not measurable or sharp enough.

There is a strong emphasis on staff professional learning. Performance management arrangements help identify clear and, in many cases, measurable objectives for staff that relate well to school priorities, focusing primarily on teaching and learning, and raising standards. Leaders have implemented a broad range of considered initiatives such as the 'Always Learning Programme' that is helping to promote good practice in teaching and learning. There are also beneficial opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills.

The school's business manager, together with the headteacher and governing body, manages the school's budget prudently. All spending decisions are linked closely to school priorities and plans for improvement. Careful allocation of the budget ensures that specific grants such as the pupil development grant are targeted to support vulnerable pupils. For example, this year, 70 of these pupils receive personalised music tuition. This is enhancing their creative skills, personal interests and cultural experience. The school has appropriate levels of staffing and learning resources to deliver the curriculum suitably.

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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