



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

A report on

**Flint High School
Maes Hyfryd
Y Fflint
Flintshire
CH6 5LL**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Flint High School

Flint High School is an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school that is maintained by Flintshire local authority. The school serves the local community of Flint and draws pupils from three primary schools in Flint, and from primary schools in the surrounding rural areas. There are currently 829 pupils on roll with 122 in the sixth form.

Around 18% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is just above the national average of 16.4%. Around 22% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. Nearly all pupils are from a white British background. Around 3% are fluent Welsh speakers.

About 17% of pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average of 22.9%. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is 1.2% which is below the national average of 2.2%.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2016. The senior leadership team includes a deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers, head of sixth form and the 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

Flint High School's has an inclusive and supportive ethos that has a beneficial impact on pupils' wellbeing and personal development. The school has strong pastoral and support arrangements. In general, pupils are well behaved, have high attendance and are courteous and respectful. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school.

Many teachers have purposeful and respectful working relationships with pupils, and teaching in a majority of lessons is effective in ensuing that pupils make suitable progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a minority of lessons teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils sufficiently well. In a few lessons teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils and there is insufficient focus on developing literacy skills.

The headteacher has a clear vision for an inclusive and supportive school and has made significant changes to the senior and middle leadership teams designed to strengthen capacity, consolidate the existing strengths in provision and support improvement. During this period of change, leadership has ensured that pupils' wellbeing has remained a strength and secured good outcomes for vulnerable learners. However, leadership has not had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching, improving pupils' writing and raising standards in key stage 4.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve standards, particularly at key stage 4

R2 Improve teaching and assessment

R3 Improve the provision for skills, particularly writing

R4 Improve the quality and 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

In lessons and over time the majority of pupils make suitable progress. Many recall prior learning and apply this well to new contexts. However, shortcomings in the writing skills of a minority are a barrier to them reaching their potential.

Many pupils listen carefully. They pick out key information and make effective use of this to support their learning. For example, pupils in a music lesson listen attentively to rhythm pattern, emulate these patterns with confidence and then create their own.

A few pupils struggle to listen and show little interest in topics.

Many pupils are confident, articulate and eloquent when they speak. They give their opinions readily and maturely when given the opportunity, such as when pupils in a drama lesson show sensitivity and self-awareness when discussing their performances. A majority have a good grasp of appropriate subject specific academic vocabulary and use this well in their oral responses to teacher questions. However, a minority of pupils are reluctant to say much beyond a brief response.

Many pupils read aloud competently. A majority of pupils successfully locate and make effective use of key information in source texts. However, a minority struggle to extract meaning and key information from texts. For example, they use key words as clues without making sure they understand the whole message of the text. As a result, they misunderstand or use information incorrectly.

Many pupils produce extended pieces suitably adapted to audience and purpose. The writing of a majority is well organised and makes use of a good range of descriptive vocabulary used to add interest and colour. However, a majority of pupils make frequent careless errors in their grammar. Further, a minority of pupils produce writing that is expressed clumsily and muddled. This makes it difficult for the reader to understand what is written and masks the quality of their subject knowledge. In general, pupils do not write as well as they speak.

Many pupils have strong mental arithmetic skills. For example, they calculate quickly proportions of numbers, and explain their method confidently. They have strong number skills. They use these to good effect in science to calculate energy changes in chemical reactions. Many confidently draw accurate conclusions from graphs. A majority of pupils construct graphs carefully, but a minority are careless, label axes incorrectly or use pen when they should use pencil.

Many pupils have suitable basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In technology many pupils make effective use of computer aided design technology to create 2D models of lamps.

Many pupils show imagination and creativity well in performance and creative arts subjects. They analyse stimulus materials and then make use of this to develop their own ideas and performances successfully. For example, in art pupils are creative in their use of language to discuss the work of Thiebaud and then in their use of varied media to create their own pop art works.

Over the last three years, pupils' performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has declined and is consistently below that in similar schools. Performance in the capped points score has also fallen and has been below outcomes in similar schools in two of the last three years. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE or equivalent grades at A*-A improved in 2018 but remains below that of similar schools.

Over the last three years pupils' performance in mathematics at key stage 4 has been consistently at or above the average for similar schools. However, pupils' performance in other subjects, including the non-core subjects, is too variable.

The performance of both boys and girls at key stage 4 has been below the average for boys and girls in similar schools in many indicators in recent years.

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has been above the average for these pupils in similar schools in nearly all indicators over the past three years. These pupils achieve well at the school. This is a strength of the school.

Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points and nearly all achieve the level 1 threshold. In 2018 two-fifths also achieved the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in full time education or training.

Performance in sixth form is sound. The achievement of three A Levels or equivalent and at the proportion gaining three grades A*-C is above the average for similar schools. However, achievement at the highest grades is below similar schools.

Across the school pupils rarely practise their Welsh language skills. In Welsh lessons, pupils lack confidence to speak Welsh beyond brief responses to teachers' questions. By the end of key stage 4 the majority write in Welsh with a fair degree of fluency and many write brief paragraphs with suitable accuracy and understanding of tenses. The proportion of pupils who are entered for a Welsh language qualification is increasing. Most pupils are entered for a Welsh second language qualification and a majority achieve a level 2 qualification.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

The inclusive, supportive ethos of the school contributes successfully to the wellbeing of pupils. They feel a strong sense of community and belonging.

Many pupils show respect, care and courtesy for others and demonstrate good social and life skills. They work effectively with each other, for example, as mentors supporting younger pupils. Pupils participate beneficially in socially responsible initiatives such as 'Restart a Heart Day' to raise awareness of cardiac arrest.

There are high participation rates in an inclusive extra-curricular programme. For example, in these sessions pupils enjoy chess, craft, drumming and drama. These activities contribute successfully to pupils' cultural development and this is a strength in the school.

Many pupils understand well how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and the importance of diet and exercise. Many take part in a wide range of sporting opportunities such as basketball, swimming, and scooter and skateboard club.

The majority of pupils are confident that their views matter to the school and that they are listened to. The work of the Student Council and their involvement in decision making is developing suitably. For example, they are currently working with external partners to develop safer routes to school. Pupils benefit from innovative leadership opportunities, such as, sports coaching experience abroad, most recently in America and Sri Lanka.

Many pupils feel safe and supported at school. They believe that the school deals well with the few incidents of bullying, and nearly all say that they have someone to talk to if they are worried.

Most pupils settle quickly, stay on task and are eager to learn. However, a very few pupils do not behave well in lessons. They are too easily distracted, lack concentration, and disrupt the learning of others. In a few instances, pupils' work is incomplete or poorly presented.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

In many lessons, teachers foster positive relationships with their pupils and create a pleasant and friendly learning environment. They have sound subject knowledge, communicate clearly and are effective language models. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not manage the learning environment well enough, and as a result a very few pupils are disruptive.

In the few highly effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils. In these lessons, teachers use a wide range of resources that interest pupils and stimulate them to engage well and make good progress. They plan challenging activities that build successfully on pupils' prior knowledge and ensure strong progress in subject skills and in literacy and numeracy.

In the majority of lessons, teachers use a range of suitable resources to support learning. In these lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour positively, circulate the classroom, and offer suitable support and guidance to individual pupils.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not set clear learning objectives or plan well to develop subject knowledge and understanding and literacy skills, particularly writing.

A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. They plan unrelated tasks that do not develop learning in a logical sequence. Overall, the work is not challenging enough or suitable for all abilities and there is little focus on developing literacy skills. In these lessons, teachers talk too much and do not allow pupils to work independently or with others often enough.

In the majority of lessons, teachers do not probe pupils' understanding well enough. In a few lessons, teachers provide useful verbal feedback, on a whole class and individual level. In books, a few teachers provide useful and diagnostic written feedback that identifies clearly how pupils can improve their work. However, the quality and usefulness of verbal and written feedback are too variable across and

within subjects. In a few cases teachers overpraise mediocre work and comments are too superficial. Further, the value of their feedback is undermined because they do not expect pupils to respond or make improvements to their work.

The school provides a wide range of valuable courses for pupils in key stage 4 that are relevant to their locality and interests, such as engineering and health and social care. In the sixth form, there is a range of interesting courses that supports both academic and vocational pathways for older learners, including computing, criminology and medical science. The school provides appropriate skills lessons for pupils in key stage 3 that promote independent learning and develop resilience. However, the school does not currently assess pupils' progress in this area. As a result, leaders are unable to evaluate the impact of this provision on pupils' standards.

The school provides tailored and effective interventions to pupils with weak reading skills. There is an engaging alternative curriculum for the very few pupils in key stage 4 at risk of becoming disengaged with learning. The school provides valuable extra-curricular activities to enrich the learning of more able pupils.

Pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form gain enriching life experiences through opportunities to support their community. For example, they visit a local nursing home to meet with the residents and raise funds for national charities. The school offers beneficial extra-curricular events to enhance pupils' learning experiences, for example theatre trips and other musical and cultural activities. However, opportunities to celebrate Welsh culture and heritage are underdeveloped. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in school clubs, such as the chess club, the craft club and the school choir. The school promotes healthy living well through many opportunities for pupils to take part in sports and fitness activities.

The school uses a suitable range of information to identify pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. It provides appropriate literacy interventions to support these pupils. A few subject areas set a range of suitable tasks for pupils to practise and develop their literacy skills. However, planning for and co-ordination of the progressive development of pupils' literacy and ICT skills are underdeveloped. Consequently, teachers do not provide sufficient suitable opportunities for developing these skills in relevant contexts across different subjects.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Flint High School is a caring and inclusive community. The school ensures that pupils' wellbeing needs are met through its strong commitment to pastoral care and inclusion.

There is effective and well-designed provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The ALN team provide valuable support to pupils with a range of complex needs. Pupils with ALN access the mainstream curriculum consistently well and this reflects the school's inclusive approach. Well-planned transition arrangements with cluster primary schools help pupils with additional learning needs to settle successfully at the school.

There are valuable and effective intervention sessions that help to ensure that many pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in reading, comprehension and spelling.

The school makes effective use of a broad range of professional support including physiotherapists, occupational health specialists and external agencies such as Action for Children. This specialist assistance contributes well to vulnerable pupils' wellbeing and learning. The pastoral team provides a range of relevant intervention including providing access to counsellors and a range of support staff through their 'Learn Be' centre. However, as this is a new provision, it is too soon to judge its impact.

The school has a suitable tracking system to monitor pupils' academic progress. This allows leaders to provide targeted support for pupils at risk of underachievement in key stage 4. However, they do not always make consistent use of this data to provide support for all groups of learners. Recently the school has revised the system to allow leaders to identify underachievement more easily. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of the changes.

The school ensures that pupils' wellbeing needs are met through its strong provision for and focus on pastoral care and inclusion. The provision is supported by activities designed to develop pupils' social and emotional skills such as a debating competition on mental health. There is suitable provision for promoting pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school makes beneficial use of partnerships with a range of agencies such as 'Careers Wales' and the 'My Education, Employment and Enterprise' project to enhance the personal and social education curriculum. These help offer helpful guidance and advice on future career choices.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. In addition, there is a wide range of valuable and well-attended range of extra-curricular activities, such as swimming and mountain biking, that help to promote regular exercise.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in social and cultural activities outside of lessons, such as the recent school production 'Beauty and the Beast' and educational visits to Barcelona and Iceland. The school's work to support pupils' personal skills and social development contributes significantly to the pupils' feeling of belonging to the school community. This has a positive impact on the behaviour and attitudes of most pupils.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has a clear vision of an inclusive school that supports and meets the needs of pupils in their local community. He is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher and appropriately by the recently appointed members of the senior leadership team.

During the last 18 months, the headteacher has introduced significant changes to the structure and membership of senior and middle leadership teams to strengthen capacity, consolidate the existing strengths in provision and support improvement in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities which cover the key aspects of school leadership and management. However, there is insufficient time for a few members of the senior leadership team to undertake these roles effectively.

Although leaders are aware of the broad areas in need of improvement, it has not targeted these areas precisely enough. Leadership has not had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching, improving pupils' writing and raising standards in key stage 4.

The majority of leaders carry out their role suitably. However, a minority of middle leaders do not understand their role fully and these leaders do not have a firm grasp on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the areas that they lead. These leaders have not been able to provide sufficient, sustained improvements in their areas of responsibility.

There are appropriate arrangements for performance management. However, many performance management objectives are not clear or precise enough to enable teachers to plan for or measure their improvement successfully.

Governors have a sound knowledge of the school and many are linked appropriately to departments. Governors are supportive of the school and offer leaders suitable challenge.

Leaders carry out a useful range of activities to inform their evaluation of the school's work. These activities have helped senior leaders identify appropriately a number of important areas for development in the school's work. However, the evaluation of provision does not focus well enough on its impact on pupils' standards and their skills.

Improvement planning at whole-school and departmental level focuses appropriately on four appropriate priorities, including improving the accuracy and reliability of assessment information, and on improving outcomes in key stage 4. As a result, leaders have worked suitably together to improve the accuracy of assessment information in order identify underachievement swiftly.

Many middle leaders do not monitor the quality of provision or identify strengths and areas for development in their areas well enough. Their improvement planning does not pay sufficient attention to their subject development priorities. Currently learning managers are not involved in self-evaluation and improvement planning in their areas of responsibility. Despite these shortcomings leadership has had positive impact in a number of aspects. It has successfully maintained a strong sense of community and the wellbeing of pupils is a strength. They have also created effectively an environment where vulnerable pupils are cared for and achieve well. Pupils eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs perform consistently well.

Teachers are beginning to explore new approaches to teaching through research projects and in collaboration with other teachers internally. The school's involvement in the pioneer schools' network has contributed to improvements in provision for wellbeing and mental health effectively.

The headteacher, business manager and finance committee monitor school finances and resources skilfully. This has enabled the school to record a budget surplus for the last three-years. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that all leaders manage resources well. Through an effective programme of site improvements and purposeful use of accommodation, the school provides a positive learning environment. For example, pupils from the neighbouring special school share the catering facilities. This benefits both schools and contributes well to the inclusive nature of the school.

Leaders use specific grants such as the pupil development grant effectively to strengthen provision and improve outcomes for 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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