



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

A report on

Coleg Llanymddyfri

**Queensway
Llandovery
Carmarthenshire
SA20 0EE**

Date of inspection: March 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Coleg Llanymddyfri

Llandovery College is a co-educational independent boarding and day school that was established in 1848. It is situated in the town of Llandovery in Carmarthenshire. The school caters for pupils aged from 4 to 18 years.

There are currently 248 pupils on roll. There are 42 pupils in the preparatory school. In the secondary school, there are 206 pupils, including 89 in the sixth form. Around three-fifths of pupils are boys, although the precise balance varies in different age groups across the school.

Most pupils come from the wider local area stretching from Llanelli, Ammanford and Lampeter into Carmarthenshire and towards Pembrokeshire. A minority of pupils are boarders and are drawn from Wales, other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas.

Llandovery College educates pupils with a broad range of abilities. Around one-fifth of pupils have additional learning needs (ALN) including dyslexia and autistic spectrum condition. Five pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

The school was last inspected in March 2013. Since that inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership team. The warden was appointed in September 2019 while the deputy warden was appointed to her position in the previous year.

Summary

In the last three years, Llandovery College has faced considerable challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The school responded rapidly to the pandemic, providing all pupils with worthwhile opportunities to continue their learning online. There have also been many changes at the school, including the appointment of a new warden, the restructuring of the leadership team, changes to the curriculum and the introduction of both a faculty and a house structure.

Overall, standards achieved by pupils are suitable. The progress made by pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is particularly strong and this is facilitated by a very flexible approach to curriculum provision. However, more able pupils do not always progress as well as they should or use their skills to a level that matches their ability.

Pupils take pride in being part of their school community. Across the school, pupils have strong working relationships with staff and this contributes to their positive attitudes to learning. There is a strong focus across the school on pupil well-being and many senior school pupils particularly value the enrichment sessions in the timetable.

The school has recently introduced a 'middle years' curriculum for Years 7 and 8 where teachers use a topic-based approach. The curriculum in the senior school is regularly reviewed and refined to reflect the interests and abilities of pupils.

The sporting provision for the whole school community is a particular strength of the school. Pupils, staff and parents are proud of the opportunities that are provided for pupils to represent their school, as well as regional and national teams, in a wide range of sports. In addition, there are opportunities to participate in school productions or sing in one of the school choirs.

Senior leaders provide strong direction and governors have a strong understanding of the school. Leaders' approaches to evaluating important aspects of the school's work, including the impact of teaching on pupil progress, are at an early stage of development.

Llandovery College meets all the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, needed to maintain registration.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching, in particular to challenge more able pupils, learning from best practice in the school
- R2 Ensure that the school's improvement planning processes have a clear focus on the impact of its provision on pupil progress and well-being

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Learning

Over time, many pupils make good progress. The strong progress made by many older pupils and those with ALN links closely to the well-tailored bespoke curriculum in the senior school. However, across the school, more able pupils do not always progress as well as they should or use their skills to a level that matches their ability. Learning activities do not always challenge these pupils well enough to think more deeply or apply their learning independently in more complex scenarios.

Pupils across the school have well-developed communication skills. Nearly all pupils are articulate, and most are confident speaking to visitors. Across the school, most pupils are confident in responding to questions in class. Many pupils share their opinions enthusiastically with their peers and the teacher. For example, Year 13 discussed robustly the impact of crime and disorder legislation in relation to the Sarah Everard case. In addition, many pupils listen carefully to their teachers. Many older pupils in the middle school demonstrate strong active listening skills and a few build well on the points made by their peers to develop a sophisticated understanding of the meaning of the text being studied. However, across the school, a few pupils do not always listen well enough when others are speaking.

Overall, as pupils progress through the school their reading skills are at least appropriate for their age and ability and successfully enable them to access materials across the curriculum. For example, many sixth-form pupils read and analyse government policies confidently and use their understanding to rephrase the information in their own words to form the basis of an argument.

The standards of writing across the school are appropriate for the age and ability of pupils. In Year 3 and 4 many pupils use a range of suitable adjectives to describe a person. By Year 9, many pupils demonstrate effective development of their essay writing skills, when responding to the question, 'Why did Hitler come to power?' In Year 11, many pupils show a strong understanding of how to analyse texts, including plays and poetry. These pupils have strong evaluation skills and the ability to assess the language, structure, and style of a piece of writing.

Across the school, most pupils develop numeracy skills which are at the expected level. Nearly all pupils in Year 3 and 4 recognise different types of angles. Many know associated mathematical language such as horizontal, vertical, parallel and perpendicular. When given the opportunity, many pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts accurately. By Year 9, many pupils recall key mathematical facts quickly and accurately and apply them suitably during lessons. For example, they calculate accurately percentage change for real-life contexts such as the increase and decrease in household bills. Many older pupils in the senior school have secure numeracy skills that they apply successfully across the curriculum.

The digital skills of nearly all pupils have developed due to the effective provision made by the school during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a strong focus on

using digital technology to communicate effectively, to complete their work and for research.

When given the opportunity, most pupils show strong creative and artistic skills, for example when exploring the techniques of Emil Nolde or when composing for the piano using a Welsh song as a stimulus.

The standards achieved by pupils in a range of sports, including rugby, are extremely high. The development of pupils' physical skills, especially in the senior school, is a particular strength of the school.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging, which contributes effectively to their well-being. Most feel safe and secure and are confident that there is an adult that they can speak to who would deal with any concerns promptly, if needed.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour as they move around the school during breaks and between lessons is exemplary. They understand the purpose of rules and sanctions and younger pupils especially are highly motivated by the reward system.

Pupils in a position of responsibility take pride in their roles and feel that they can influence the work of the school and the well-being of other pupils. For example, prefects set up a social media account to enable older pupils to submit anonymous requests or ideas and participate in polls regarding their mental health. This led to significant changes in the well-being programme. This ability to influence the school's work is further highlighted by the successful campaign led by the pupil leadership team for free sanitary products to be available throughout the school, including the insistence that this should also be available in the preparatory school. The school has recently introduced the posts of eco-prefects, though their work is at an early stage of development.

A majority of secondary-aged pupils contribute their views confidently to the school council and feel they are listened to and suitable actions are taken in response. For example, the school re-opened the boarding house common rooms following a campaign organised by the school council. Pupils in the preparatory school make use of the 'suggestions post box', which helps to ensure that pupils feel they are heard. For example, this has led to coat pegs recently being added to the outside of the great hall for pupils to hang their coats when they have to walk over in the rain for their meals.

The school's promotion of healthy lifestyles has a positive effect on pupils' well-being. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet. Nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of physical education and sporting activities in both lessons and co-curricular clubs and develop their physical skills successfully, many to a very high standard. Most pupils, from Year 5 onwards, are members of a sports team, an experience that they greatly value and is highly regarded across the school. All Year 9 pupils participate in the combined cadet force, and many participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. These opportunities

encourage both physical well-being and the development of the pupils' leadership skills.

Many pupils enjoy participating in drama and music, including through the regular school productions and the choirs, which perform regularly in school services and concerts. Pupils also enjoy taking part in the annual 'activities week', including visits to the Botanical Gardens and Llansteffan Beach.

Across the school, nearly all pupils trust and have constructive working relationships with their teachers. In lessons and co-curricular activities, most pupils behave well and settle quickly to the task. Many sustain concentration for an extended period of time and have positive attitudes to their learning. The majority apply themselves well and engage positively with the activities provided. Many pupils from across the ability range demonstrate confidence in contributing to class discussions. Many have a respectful and supportive attitude towards the contributions of their peers such as when developing and discussing their own predictions about possible endings to a novel with their class. However, during class discussions a few pupils do not always wait for their turn to contribute or give others sufficient time to share their ideas.

Many pupils enjoy trying new ideas and techniques and often have a positive attitude to learning from mistakes. A few pupils are reflective learners and use feedback effectively to make progress in their learning.

Many older pupils demonstrate resilience outside the classroom, learning to manage disappointment effectively, for example when facing tough competition for a place in the sports team. During sixth-form lessons, many pupils persevere to complete complex tasks. However, this is not consistent across the school and where there is a lack of challenge in the classroom this restricts pupils, particularly the more able, from developing into capable and resilient learners.

Many pupils use the independent learning skills that they developed during the COVID-19 pandemic effectively for both classwork and for homework, for example when organising their notes in an online space. Many pupils use technology appropriately in the classroom such as when researching and using specially designed online resources. However, a minority of pupils on occasions lose focus in lessons because they are distracted by the technology they are using and do not complete the task set.

Owing to the Coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

In the preparatory school and middle school (Years 7 and 8), teachers use a topic-based approach to deliver the curriculum. This provides all pupils with a broad and balanced education. In the middle years, the recently revised curriculum topics provide particularly worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry and critical thinking skills. In addition, all of these pupils learn Welsh and French. The school has recently revised its personal, social and health education scheme, and

this meets pupils' needs appropriately. Pupils enjoy taking part in a broad range of physical education activities including sports and swimming. Younger pupils in the preparatory school benefit from their fortnightly opportunity to learn outside in the extensive school grounds, for example through the forest school provision. However, there are limited opportunities overall for pupils across the preparatory school to learn outdoors.

Teachers in the preparatory school provide beneficial activities that focus clearly on developing pupils' literacy skills. In the pre-prep class, pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters and letter-strings make, and this supports them to begin to read and write independently. Across the preparatory school, teachers regularly read a well-chosen novel aloud to their class. This helps pupils to develop a love of reading and to experience the joy of getting 'lost in a book'. It also prepares them well to access their future studies.

However, the provision for pupils in the preparatory school and middle years to develop their mathematical and numeracy skills is less well developed. Activities do not always challenge more able pupils to work at a high enough level. As a result, these pupils lose motivation and their progress is not always strong enough.

The senior school provides a flexible curriculum tailored to the interests and abilities of pupils from Year 9 upwards. There is a broad range of GCSE courses. The school provides pupils with a wide range of options in the sixth form, which allows them to mix and match both A-Level and BTEC courses. In addition, all pupils benefit from a worthwhile well-being programme and personalised careers advice.

Throughout the school, the curriculum is enhanced through an extensive range of co-curricular activities which provide pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their artistic, creative, team working and leadership skills. For example, there is a comprehensive performing arts programme and many pupils participate in the combined cadet force and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

The school is proud of its elite level rugby heritage and recent alumni continue to represent their national teams. In addition to the impressive rugby provision, most pupils represent the school in a wide range of team and individual sports, for example netball, hockey, skiing and rifle shooting.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum and meets the requirement for the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Across the school, staff know their pupils very well. Most teachers deliver clear, patient explanations of the activities and demonstrate concepts to help pupils to understand their learning. They structure lessons carefully so that pupils build their skills, knowledge and confidence through scaffolded practice tasks, before attempting to apply their learning. Nearly all teachers adapt resources well to support pupils, particularly those with ALN, to access the learning.

Around a half of the teachers provide suitable pace and challenge during their activities to ensure that pupils develop appropriate skills and knowledge. These teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use effectively to help pupils to

develop their interest in the subject and to deepen their understanding of key concepts and wider principles.

However, around half of the teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve are not high enough. On occasions, the overuse of worksheets constrains the opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. As a result, more able pupils do not always make strong enough progress.

Across the school, teachers provide appropriate written and verbal feedback to their pupils. In around a half of cases and especially in the preparatory school, pupils respond suitably to their teachers' written feedback and this helps them to make progress. However, in a few cases, although teachers provide generous praise for the work in pupils' books, they do not provide precise enough written or verbal feedback to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to help them to improve their work.

Reports to parents are informative. However, on occasions the comments are not focused well enough on individual pupils' achievements and progress. In the preparatory school, reports do not contain targets or next steps for the pupils. In the secondary phase, the targets are not always specific enough to inform pupils what they need to do to improve

Care, support and guidance

Leaders and staff place a high priority on the well-being of all pupils. This is a strength at the school. The school's pastoral team meet regularly to discuss the well-being of individual pupils and to share good practice in supporting pupils' emotional needs. Staff receive regular training on well-being and mental health, such as how to support pupils with bereavement and other trauma.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is also a strength. As a result, most of these pupils make strong progress from their starting points. A well-trained team of staff support these pupils effectively by providing them with bespoke provision to meet their individual needs. This provision continued online during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided these pupils with helpful continuity and support. All pupils on the school's ALN register have useful pupil profiles, which focus clearly on important information about their individual needs. Although all pupils with a statement of special educational needs have an individual education plan that staff update regularly in line with annual review meetings, these plans do not always contain specific targets or measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for staff to measure these pupils' progress towards their targets accurately.

Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to perform, including annual productions for both younger and older pupils. In addition, pupils of all ages have the chance to gain public speaking qualifications and to take part in a wide range of performances such as debating and 'open mic' events. The school celebrates its Welsh heritage successfully through its environment and activities such as the annual Eisteddfodau.

Staff encourage pupils to participate in local community activities. For example, the combined cadet forces contribute to the annual Remembrance Day service and

pupils help tidy the local church graveyard. The school gives pupils valuable opportunities to support local and international charitable causes on a regular basis. For example, through a local 'challenge aid' initiative, the school helps support schools in Africa. Through this work, pupils get a sense of helping people who live in challenging circumstances.

In the senior school, there are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills by taking on additional responsibilities as they move through the school. For example, they can become a member of the school council or a sports or music captain, posts that are held by many pupils with ALN. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils in the preparatory school to develop their leadership skills or take on responsibilities.

Leaders are developing a sound culture of safeguarding at the school. There is an established system to report safeguarding concerns regarding pupils and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. However, not all staff know how to report a concern they may have about senior members of staff. The designated safeguarding officer provides staff with strong leadership including regular safeguarding update training, for example on recognising the impact of adverse childhood experiences. The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive safeguarding information upon internal appointment. However, checks to ensure that all members of staff provided by external agencies receive safeguarding training are less well embedded.

Leadership and management

Over the past three years, the school has faced considerable challenges, which include the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the governing body and current warden, with the support of the trustees, took swift and decisive actions to help ensure the stability and future growth of the school. Having gained the confidence of most staff, the warden has worked successfully with them to secure continuity of provision and support pupils' well-being and learning throughout this difficult period for the school.

Since their appointment, the warden and other senior leaders have prioritised actions to strengthen the school's caring community ethos. This approach is evident in recent developments such as revisions to the house and pastoral structures to better support pupils, and the introduction of an employee support service for staff. It is also reflected in the valuable range of strategic partnerships the school has enhanced to benefit pupils and staff such as with national sporting and local education organisations.

Together with senior leaders, the warden provides strong direction for all areas of the school's work, with largely appropriate strategic priorities and key actions. These actions include restructuring leadership roles and revising responsibilities to focus more on improvement planning and enhancing the quality of provision. There is a useful structure of meetings that complement these revised roles and help to support staff at all levels to fulfil their responsibilities. Staff roles and responsibilities are generally set out clearly in detailed and specific job descriptions and, in general, staff have a secure understanding of their individual role. Overall, the job descriptions of

leaders and teaching staff do not provide a strong enough focus on responsibilities for pupil progress, improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. In a few cases, there is not enough clarity about specific responsibilities to enable staff to readily identify line management arrangements.

The school's recently revised appraisal arrangements are an effective means of reviewing the work of staff, setting priorities for improvement and identifying relevant professional learning opportunities. Where underperformance has been identified, this has been dealt with in a sensitive and supportive manner.

Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's work, the issues that affect it and the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. There is a beneficial working relationship between governors and senior leaders, and together they determine priorities and agree realistic action plans. The governors fulfil their role as a critical friend effectively by challenging the school, where appropriate. The trustees, governing body and warden also work together effectively to ensure prudent management of the school's budget. They set out clear priorities for spending and balance these suitably with the school's short-term needs and long-term aspirations.

The recently introduced faculty review process involves pupils and teaching staff suitably in the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes. Whilst it is too early to evaluate the full impact of the review on pupils' learning, well-being and the quality of teaching, senior leaders are starting to consider the outcomes to help inform strategic improvement planning.

Many of the school's improvement planning processes and related documentation do not focus well enough on pupils' progress, the standards they achieve and the quality of teaching. As a result, the school's arrangements to evaluate progress towards making improvements in these important areas are not effective enough. In addition, leaders do not consider the impact of teaching on pupil progress when they complete lesson observations.

Across the school, leaders and staff are developing a positive professional learning culture that is helping nurture improvement in the quality of provision for pupils' learning and well-being. Individual professional learning activities are linked clearly to the school's appraisal process and improvement priorities. These priorities include, for example, the recent focus on planning to meet the individual learning needs of a wide range of pupils and dealing with trauma and mental health issues to support pupils' well-being.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([Estyn Website](#))

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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