



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

A report on

Llanishen High School

**Heol Hir
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5YL**

Date of inspection: September 2023

by

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

About Llanishen High School

Name of provider	Llanishen High School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1694
Pupils of statutory school age	1465
Number in sixth form	227
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 20.2%)	26.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 17.8%)	8.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/06/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/04/2016
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Llanishen High School provides pupils with a vibrant environment where they are nurtured and valued as part of its inclusive community. Leaders are committed to ensuring that every pupil succeeds. They have taken decisive actions to reduce the impact of poverty and support all its pupils. The school offers an exceptionally broad range of extra-curricular activities, which enriches pupils' experiences and raises their aspirations.

Staff foster positive working relationships with most pupils, who in turn engage well in their lessons. They behave well and demonstrate high levels of respect for staff and their peers. In many lessons, teachers capture pupils' interest and help them to make effective progress in their knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and develop their verbal responses. As a result, many pupils speak confidently and use a broad range of vocabulary to express their views. However, teachers do not always offer pupils useful written feedback on targeted pieces of work. In a few lessons, pupils do not make enough progress, mainly because of teachers' low expectations and undemanding tasks.

There is a broad range of subjects for pupils to choose from in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form. They receive useful advice and guidance to help them make informed choices about their subjects and their future. The school has begun to roll out its Curriculum for Wales In Year 7 and Year 8 after piloting approaches. The curriculum enables pupils to develop a beneficial understanding of diversity and inclusion. However, it is not always demanding enough to ensure pupils make progress and the provision for developing pupils' skills and their grasp of Welsh across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Leaders and staff secure a positive safeguarding culture where most pupils feel safe and free from bullying. The school's work to restore relationships following any reported incidents of bullying helps to create an inclusive culture where pupils feel confident to challenge or report any behaviour that causes them concern.

Pupils with additional learning needs, including those who attend the school's Hearing Impaired and Autistic Spectrum Disorder resource bases, benefit from highly effective support. They make good progress against their targets and are fully integrated into the school community.

Leaders have focused closely on improving pupils' attendance, in particular to reduce persistent absenteeism. While this work is having a positive impact on steadily improving pupils' attendance, these rates remain below the levels they were prior to the pandemic.

Leaders regularly review relevant data to identify areas of strengths and improvement. However, they do not use a broad enough range of evidence to support their evaluations. As a result, improvement planning is not sharp enough and leaders at all levels do not have a clear enough view of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning so that they focus more precisely on the impact of teaching on learning
- R2 Improve the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills including Welsh across the curriculum
- R3 Improve the quality and impact of written feedback
- R4 Continue to improve attendance

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to (i) the work that the school does to reduce the impact of poverty and (ii) The school's enrichment programme.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils make good progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. They show a sound recall of previous learning and many can apply their knowledge and skills appropriately for example when explaining the movement of different substances across membranes in biology. In a few cases, pupils make rapid progress in their understanding as a result of inspirational teaching. In a few lessons, pupils do not develop their thinking skills well enough, mostly because of a lack of challenge in the work set or poor questioning from their teacher.

Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and their peers. Many speak confidently and offer extended responses to their teacher's questions. They contribute well to class discussions and use their subject knowledge pertinently to support their views, for example when discussing the importance of stamina in different sports. They work together effectively and discuss their ideas enthusiastically in pairs and small groups. Most pupils listen attentively and respond to their teachers' instructions without having to ask for support or further explanation.

Most pupils have well-developed reading skills. Many read aloud clearly with good expression. They use a range of useful strategies to gain understanding of unfamiliar words. A majority of pupils are able to gain understanding of more complex texts independently. Many skim and scan texts successfully to gather information. Many respond well to challenging reading materials showing empathy for example when

discussing the poem 'Blessing' about life on the streets of Mumbai. Many succeed in analysing reading pieces effectively and finding the meaning in literary pieces, when interpreting Shakespeare's plays and the way in which the playwright creates sympathy for Shylock. A majority of pupils are able to synthesise information from a range of sources successfully. However, pupils do not use their reading skills frequently enough across the curriculum.

Many pupils produce a great deal of extended writing in their English lessons. They convey their ideas clearly, use a wide vocabulary and write with appropriate technical accuracy. A minority of pupils continue to make too many spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors as they progress through the school. In a few instances, pupils carry out too many low level tasks such as copying information or filling in gaps in texts. In Key Stage 4, pupils write at length suitably in a variety of subjects. In Year 7 and Year 8, pupils produce extended pieces of writing in only a few subjects other than English.

During their time in school, most pupils develop sound numeracy skills. They recall basic number facts accurately and calculate, using the four operations, securely. Many are able to handle fractions, decimals and percentages appropriately. A majority construct and plot scatter graphs independently and select appropriate lines of best fit. However, they do not always analyse and interpret these graphs. Many pupils can use basic formulae well to calculate different quantities such as density or speed, and a majority are developing their ability to rearrange equations suitably. A few struggle with basic number skills and mathematical concepts. In Year 7 and Year 8, pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in a few subjects. However, overall, they do not apply these skills progressively in relevant areas of learning well enough.

Most pupils use basic ICT skills such as searching for key words on the internet or word-processing competently. However, they do not develop more advanced ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum.

In many cases, pupils develop their creativity well such as when employing extended metaphors to describe a busy street in New York in their English lessons, devising performances in their drama lessons and writing poetry in their Welsh lessons. However, in other subjects, where clear opportunities exist, they do not develop their creative skills enough.

Most pupils make good progress in their physical skills such as when playing basketball. They also develop their fine motor skills well in design and technology lessons creating cardboard stands for picture frames using scalpels and deft folding.

Many pupils develop their understanding of Welsh in their Welsh lessons suitably. They have good pronunciation and a majority can read basic sentences for understanding well. They speak confidently and respond appropriately to simple questions. A minority of pupils do not have a good enough grasp of Welsh. In general, pupils do not use their Welsh outside of their Welsh lessons enough.

In the majority of cases, pupils in the sixth-form make strong progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. Many pupils are able to use this understanding well to make predictions or draw reasoned conclusions. A majority are eloquent and draw on a sophisticated vocabulary to express their ideas. In a minority of cases, pupils do

not make as much progress as they should, often as a result of shortcomings in teaching.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils at Llanishen High School are proud of their school. They value the inclusive culture and feel that the teachers care for them as individuals. Overall, pupils feel that the school is a safe environment where their well-being is a priority. Most pupils are very respectful, polite and courteous to their peers, staff and visitors.

Most pupils feel say that they are free from bullying. They understand the anti-bullying procedures and know that they have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Most pupils behave well in lessons, when moving around the school and during break and lunch time.

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are punctual to lessons and motivated, and they engage well with the tasks set. Many pupils work effectively in group activities and persevere with challenging tasks. They take pride in the presentation of their work. In lessons where teaching is most effective, pupils demonstrate exceptional levels of concentration and show a real curiosity in their work.

Nearly all sixth form pupils enjoy coming to school. They have positive working relationships with their teachers. Many feel well supported and appreciate the advice provided when taking the next steps in their life. The majority are well motivated and demonstrate interest in their subjects. Many pupils are developing increasing maturity and independence. However, in a few cases, pupils show a lack of independence and do not focus well enough.

Many pupils say that they are treated fairly and are encouraged to respect others through the personal and social education (PSE) programme, form tutor time, and assemblies. They develop a positive appreciation of diversity through activities such as the school's 'Cultural Celebration' day and Pride month.

Most pupils think that the extra-curricular provision is a very positive feature of the school. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities on offer, which includes creative writing, debating club, choirs and 'inclusive badminton' where 'no kit is required, just enthusiasm'. There are high levels of regular participation within the after-school clubs. This has a positive impact on the health and well-being of pupils and helps build their confidence.

The school ensures that pupils from all groups, including vulnerable pupils, take on responsibilities within the school. For example, younger pupils volunteer as librarians, or act as buddies to support transition, and pupils eligible for free school meals have the opportunity to participate in a leadership programme in Year 11 and Year 12. A few pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example by being members of the 'LHS Pride', Sustainability and Environment, and the Community and Charities groups. These pupils have organised charity days and other events to celebrate the diverse culture at Llanishen High School. Sixth-form pupils take on roles as senior prefects, read with pupils new to the English language

or act as student ambassadors who helped set up the school library. Pupil leaders show interest and pride in their involvement and contributions to school life.

Pupils value the opportunity for form representatives to attend the 'Question Time' session with senior leaders to discuss school issues. They have influenced aspects of the school curriculum such as expanding the range of texts from authors of diverse backgrounds in English, increasing the focus on local history and challenging gender stereotypes in science. However, pupils are sometimes unclear about how the school takes account of their views to inform decisions that affect them.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared to last year and the number who are persistent absentees has reduced. However, the attendance is still below pre-pandemic levels.

Teaching and learning experiences

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm. They foster positive working relationships with pupils and manage their classrooms effectively. This creates a safe and calm working environment for learning.

In a few cases, inspirational teaching results in pupils making very rapid progress. In these lessons, teachers display a passion for their subject that inspires pupils. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve. They know their pupils very well and plan imaginative activities that capture pupils' interest and motivate them. These teachers use questioning skilfully to probe and extend pupils' thinking. They encourage pupils to offer high quality responses and adapt their teaching skilfully in response to the needs of pupils.

In many instances, teachers have suitable expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan their lessons well and consider carefully what they want pupils to learn. Teachers provide pupils with high-quality resources that engage them well in their learning. In these lessons, teachers provide clear instructions and explanations to help pupils understand concepts. They move around the classroom and ask questions to individual pupils to check understanding and offer them valuable support when necessary. They use closed questioning to check pupils' recall and open questions beneficially to probe their understanding. They adapt the pace of their lessons in response to pupils' learning. In many cases, teaching assistants provide valuable support to individual pupils. They ensure that pupils understand the work and develop their independence over time. However, in a few cases they provide too much support.

In a few lessons, teachers do not structure their lessons well enough. In these lessons, teachers often provide lengthy explanations leading to pupils losing interest in their learning and do not allow pupils to develop independently. In these lessons, activities are set to keep pupils busy, and teachers focus on what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. Their questioning does not challenge pupils to extend their responses or develop their thinking. The pace of learning is too slow, and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Many teachers provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback about how they can improve their work. In a few cases, pupils benefit from useful written feedback.

However, in many cases pupils do not receive clear written feedback and opportunities to improve targeted pieces of work. Reports to parents are suitably regular and contain useful information. They include progress comments on pupils' strengths and useful advice on ways they can improve in subject areas.

The curriculum for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 provides suitable opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in a broad range of subjects. However, the breadth of this curriculum is reduced in Year 9 when pupils begin to follow their examination courses. The Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 curriculum offers a wide variety of subjects including a range of vocational options that meet the needs of the pupils successfully. The school has a polytunnel that is an integral part of the school's health and well-being curriculum where pupils have the opportunity to work in an outdoor environment learning about food growth and production.

The school has based its initial planning for the Curriculum for Wales on the United Nations' sustainable development goals and the challenges and opportunities facing humanity. Area leaders and skills co-ordinators have collaborated to develop links across each Area of Learning and Experience. However, this has resulted in certain subjects planning contrived tasks that do not develop pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills well enough. Many teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy skills during their examination courses in Key Stage 4. However, the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum, especially in Year 7 and Year 8, is not planned or co-ordinated well enough.

The school has a range of useful enrichment opportunities for more able pupils. These include a university outreach programme for Year 9 and Year 10, creative writing competitions, theatre trips and Year 7 and Year 8 mathematics challenges.

There are useful opportunities for pupils to reflect on cultural diversity and identity across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils develop an understanding of their contribution to society and to the well-being of others.

The daily extra-curricular programme of activities is a particularly strong feature of the school. It includes an exceptionally wide range of sporting clubs, a garage band, 'philosophy debating', choir, art, creative writing, product design, eco council, fashion and textiles, food and nutrition, drama and Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Pupils have a very few useful opportunities to develop their appreciation of Welsh culture and heritage for example, Eisteddfodau for Year 7 and Year 8. However, the provision for developing pupils' use of the Welsh language outside of the classroom is underdeveloped.

Care, support and guidance

Llanishen High School is a vibrant, inclusive and welcoming community where staff place pupils' well-being at the heart of their work. They aim to nurture individual growth and personal success for all members of the school community.

Leaders strive to foster a sense of 'cynefin' (a sense of belonging) for pupils. A notable example is how the PSE provision develops the values of respect, resilience,

honesty, ambition and responsibility. Leaders have worked with pupils to develop an anti-hate strategy, which has been shared widely with stakeholders and is impacting positively on pupils' sensitivity to others. The school endeavours to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' well-being, for example by providing unlimited access to period and hygiene products, a sustainable 'Prom store' where pupils can borrow clothing and accessories, breakfast provision and a free bus for pupils attending after-school activities.

The school meets the needs of pupils who access the Hearing Impaired (HI) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) specialist base provisions very well. These nurturing environments ensure that pupils feel safe and well supported, in the centres and when accessing mainstream classes.

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how to identify needs using a range of appropriate data. This information is used effectively to provide worthwhile individualised support. Individual plans for pupils with ALN are clear and identify worthwhile strategies to aid staff with their planning. However, the arrangements to evaluate the impact of these plans on teaching and learning are underdeveloped. In general, teaching assistants support pupils with ALN effectively within mainstream lessons and intervention sessions. The ALN team know their pupils well and foster positive relationships with families. The ALN Co-ordinator is supported well by senior leaders and the school is making strong progress on their transition journey with the ALN Tribunal Act (ALNET).

The school engages well with external partners to provide specialist support and guidance. Staff provide helpful information and guidance on future careers and pathways when pupils are choosing their subjects. For example, pupils are sent weekly career advice emails. At Key Stage 5, the school provides valuable individual support for pupils when they apply for university or their future careers.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding in which all staff are confident to identify and report pupils who may be at risk of harm. Child protection procedures are robust and are evaluated regularly through purposeful case review meetings. This helps the school respond promptly to reports of any safeguarding concerns, making appropriate referrals where necessary. The designated safeguarding team keep detailed records so that they can monitor closely and seek help for any pupils who they are concerned about.

The school has introduced a number of beneficial strategies to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and request support. The safeguarding team works purposefully with a wide range of external agencies, including the local authority and the NHS school in-reach service, to broker appropriate specialist support for particularly vulnerable pupils.

Leaders have introduced a range of worthwhile strategies to improve pupils' attendance and have focused purposefully on reducing persistent absenteeism, including anxiety-based school avoidance. This is leading to improvements for individual pupils and has reduced the number of persistent absentees. Staff work closely with families, providing appropriate support for those pupils who are reluctant to attend as often as they should. The school's successful Flexible Learning Centre provides pupils with bespoke timetables, which supports their return to school.

Although the school's systems and processes to promote and celebrate good attendance are strong, attendance remains below where it was before the pandemic.

The school has developed a beneficial whole-school graduated approach to dealing with instances of poor behaviour. There are effective procedures for dealing with any incidents of bullying, with a strong focus on educating all those involved through meaningful anti-bullying interventions. The school has developed a suite of worthwhile reflection resources linked to the protected characteristics. The school has introduced an offsite provision for pupils demonstrating particularly disruptive behaviour. This has resulted in no pupils being issued with fixed term exclusions for the last two years, although the number of pupils referred to this provision is high. The school's onsite Alternative Pathway Centre (APC) is a notable feature of the school's strategy to ensure that the needs of those pupils who display particularly challenging behaviours are met. This reflects the school's commitment to meet the needs of all learners.

Leadership and management

The vision, 'to create a supportive, inclusive environment that nurtures individual growth and personal success', permeates all aspects of the school's life and work. From this clear vision, the headteacher has set a strategic course to fulfil these goals. Since her appointment, she has led the school successfully and systematically on its improvement journey, creating a strong sense of community and mutual endeavour.

A relentless focus on key aspects such as improving pupil performance and behaviour, developing leaders, and refining management systems, has resulted in a shift in culture and improved life chances for pupils. Leaders promote safety, inclusivity and well-being consistently, contributing to the welcoming and caring ethos of the school.

Leaders have designed management structures and processes with a clear rationale to support the school's ambitions. Senior leaders have well-defined roles and responsibilities. The headteacher considers the responsibilities of her senior team carefully, and swaps roles judiciously to ensure that leaders have a well-developed understanding of whole school issues. Staff have valuable opportunities to improve their leadership skills, for example through secondments to the senior team.

The headteacher and senior team have secured a strong culture of reflection and improvement. Staff across the school welcome the regular opportunities to be observed for short periods of time through the school's 'lesson drop-ins'. This has helped leaders and staff to identify and share effective practice, and to identify some of their own strengths and areas for improvement.

Leaders have developed a suitable cycle of evaluation and improvement. They use an appropriate range of information to consider the effectiveness of their work. For example, leaders at all levels make helpful use of a range of pupil data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders monitor their planned actions for improvement regularly and aim to ensure that every decision is based on what is best for pupils at Llanishen High School.

Leaders gather a suitable range of information to help them to consider the effectiveness of the school's work. This has helped them to identify broad priorities for improvement and has been successful in securing notable improvements, for example in pupils' behaviour, engagement and attitudes to learning. However, leaders, at all levels, do not gather a broad enough range of first-hand evidence about the progress that pupils make in lessons or the quality of teaching and curriculum planning. As a result, they do not always identify areas for improvement precisely enough. This limits their ability to consistently plan for and secure improvements in a few areas, for example the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across subjects.

Middle leaders feel trusted and well supported by senior leaders. They have a strong sense of ownership over their areas of responsibility and carry out their roles diligently. They meet regularly with their teams to share effective practice and identify broad areas for improvement. They 'drop-in' to lessons regularly and provide constructive support to help staff improve aspects of their work. The majority are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility and have a strong understanding of effective subject specific teaching. Although most middle leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in relation to pupil outcomes at Key Stages 4 and 5, only a few have a sufficient understanding of the impact of teaching on the progress that pupils make in lessons. Furthermore, senior leaders do not hold middle leaders well enough to account for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility. As a result, leaders do not have a precise enough view of what needs to improve in relation to the quality of teaching.

The school provides a broad range of beneficial professional learning for staff that is aligned suitably to whole-school priorities whilst also supporting individual needs appropriately. Staff welcome opportunities to share effective practice and develop their leadership skills. Whilst professional learning has had a positive impact in many areas, such as improving the quality of teachers' questioning, it has not supported improvements in a few other aspects of the school's work, for example leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of teaching based on its impact on learning.

Governors are supportive of and knowledgeable about the school's work. They visit the school regularly and have a broad overview of priorities for improvement. They make a helpful contribution to setting the strategic direction of the school and offer a suitable level challenge, for example about the quality of careers advice and support for pupils in the sixth form. They have a good understanding of their role to ensure that pupils have healthy options to eat and drink while at school.

Leaders manage the school finances prudently. Spending is directed appropriately towards the school's priorities and supporting the school's vision and mission. A notable aspect of the school's work is the approach that leaders take to tackle the impact of poverty. The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is used carefully and creatively to support pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. Leaders use this to fund a wide range of valuable strategies to support pupils' well-being, provide them with enriching experiences, and ensure that they have full access to school life.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- 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 has 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, 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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