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Rhiwbina  
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02/06/2025

**Interim visit:** May 2025

Dear Shane Mock

A team of inspectors lead by Huw Davies HMI, recently visited Greenhill School to consider how the school has made progress in addressing two of the recommendations from its core inspection in April 2023. Following the core inspection the school satisfactorily addressed those matters identified in the wellbeing letter. These did not form part of the focus of this visit.

During the visit we had the opportunity to:

- meet with pupils, the senior leadership team, teachers and teaching assistants
- undertake learning walks on the main site
- scrutinise school documentation

**General Comment**

Leaders and staff at Greenhill school know their pupils very well. They use available information to carefully plan an engaging and varied curriculum that provides pupils with rich learning experiences. There is a strong moral imperative at the school to make learning as personalised as possible and to provide pupils with rewarding experiences that prepare them well as they move through the school and beyond.

There is a strong and supportive ethos within the school that places high value on wellbeing and pupil inclusion.

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Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

All staff have a secure understanding on the impact that trauma has on children and young people. They use this knowledge very skilfully to adapt provision for pupils. As a result, Greenhill school is a very calm, inclusive and supportive environment for pupils and staff alike.

### **Focus of visit**

#### **Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning, ensuring that they focus specifically on identifying the most important areas of whole-school improvement**

The school has strengthened its self-evaluation processes since the last inspection with first hand evidence gathering becoming more embedded. Senior leaders have refined their use of evaluative tools such as book scrutiny, learning walks, and peer observations to gather meaningful evidence of practice. Notably, the recent use of videoed lesson observations has evolved from a passive resource into a purposeful mechanism for self-reflection and staff development on aspects of teaching such as questioning and pupil engagement. This approach provides candid insights into the quality of teaching and learning, supports professional dialogue across the school and contributes to a culture of continuous improvement. The school has developed a strong culture of professional learning that supports the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Leadership at all levels is well developed. The senior leadership team has distributed key responsibilities effectively, promoting a strong sense of ownership and accountability. There is a strategic focus on succession planning and leadership growth, encapsulated in the school's 'growing our own' philosophy. Staff are supported through a blend of internal mentoring and external leadership programmes provided by the regional school improvement service. Performance management processes are used purposefully to identify development needs and support improvement. The school has invested significantly in professional learning.

The school engages well with a range of stakeholders. It has built productive partnerships with the local authority, including regular input from the school improvement partner to moderate pupil work through book scrutiny and learning walks. Reciprocal visits with a range of schools have supported professional dialogue and improvement. Coincidentally at the time of our visit to the school, leaders were hosting a visit from leaders from New Zealand, keen to learn about how to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Parental engagement significantly enhances the school's self-evaluation. Through informal events, feedback tools, and regular communication, parents provide valuable insights that inform curriculum planning and strategic decisions. Support services and consistent updates further strengthen this partnership, ensuring that parental views shape and improve the school's direction.

Staff benefit from regular professional supervision. Leaders respond constructively to feedback from the annual staff questionnaire, which is facilitated by the school's psychotherapist. Staff feel listened to and invested in, despite acknowledging the emotional challenges associated with the nature of the setting. The implementation of trauma-informed practices has had a positive impact, influencing not only classroom management but also the design of the school's outdoor education offer. Staff retention is high, with very few leaving the school, reflecting the growing sense of stability and commitment. Over time, there has been a notable positive cultural shift towards a more reflective, resilient, and collaborative professional environment.

The school's strategic priorities are grounded in a secure understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Staff are reflective and well-supported in contributing to these priorities, fostering a collaborative culture of continuous improvement. Major initiatives—such as capital projects and the development of the outreach centre—are thoughtfully phased across the three-year planning cycle and align well with broader local authority strategies. Key activities, including professional development reviews and reflection events, are strategically scheduled within the school calendar to maximise their effectiveness.

The school improvement plan is generally underpinned by robust financial planning. Most actions—particularly those related to infrastructure, professional learning, and learner wellbeing—include clear and appropriate cost allocations. These align effectively with strategic priorities and reflect thoughtful consideration of both one-off and recurring costs.

The school may wish to consider the following:

- Strengthening the link between self-evaluation outcomes and the school improvement plan (SIP), particularly for strategic themes like ‘growing our own’.
- Defining specific milestones and review points for actions currently marked as “ongoing”.
- Introduce more frequent interim milestones to support any review and adaptation of plans.
- Provide clearer costings for ongoing staff-related actions and embedded practices.
- Identify funding sources more routinely in the school improvement plan.
- Evaluate the value for money and anticipated impact of high-cost actions more thoroughly.

### **Improve attendance**

Since the core inspection, leaders continue to focus on improving pupils’ attendance.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to meet the varying cohort of pupils and their needs. The school has created bespoke learning opportunities to help with pupil engagement. For example, pupils, in addition to the core curriculum, can complete tiling, dog grooming, Duke of Edinburgh Award at bronze and silver and undertake bike mechanics and work experience. Additionally, leaders have invested in professional learning for all staff, enabling greater understanding on the effects of trauma on young people and how best to support to meet the pupils’ needs.

The school has a clear focus on building positive relationships with pupils and their families. The school works sensitively with new pupils on a gradual transition programme. This enables pupils to successfully engage in their learning and sustain good attendance levels, often having had previous long periods of non-attendance at their prior school. Pupils at the school speak positively about the support they receive and how *‘it is a great place to be’*.

During the current academic year, the attendance figures for those in Year 7 and joining the school was negatively impacted due to delayed completion of building works commissioned by Cardiff local authority. The school ensured all pupils received part time education at the school for the autumn term and had appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place to monitor pupils when they were not at school.

Due to the success of the school of supporting the wellbeing and academic needs of pupils, there continues to be a growing demand for sixth form places. The curriculum offer for sixth formers continues to develop essential skills that prepare pupils well for their next stage in life and learning. Overall, the attendance of sixth form pupils is a strength of the school.

The school may wish to:

- Provide clarity on 6<sup>th</sup> form attendance within a policy for sixth form.
- Continue to review use of pastoral support plans.

The inspection team would like to thank pupils and staff for their welcome.

The school's/PRU's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6817001>

Yours sincerely



**Dyfrig Ellis**

Assistant Director