

Ysgol Hendrefelin Special School
Heol Hendre
Bryncoch
Neath
SA10 7TY

16/12/2025

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: December 2025

A team of inspectors lead by Huw Davies HMI, recently visited Ysgol Hendrefelin to consider how the school has made progress in addressing the recommendations from its core inspection in March 2024.

During the visit we had the opportunity to:

- Meet with pupils and the leadership team
- Undertake learning walks and,
- Scrutinise school documentation

Focus of visit

R1: Strengthen the consistency and effectiveness of data analysis and the use of other available information to drive strategic priorities

Leaders have taken purposeful steps to improve the use of data and wider evidence, supported by enquiry projects that are beginning to embed a stronger culture of reflection and evidence-informed practice. These projects are helping staff use baselines, specialist assessments and targeted measures to identify need more accurately and refine provision. As a result there is evidence of clearer individual targets, better understanding of pupils' receptive-language needs, and improvements in pupils' reading comprehension.

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As a result of these projects, the increasing use of this information is shaping teaching approaches, informing professional learning, and supporting work to strengthen pupils' engagement and independence. However, progress is variable across the school, and whole school approaches to data analysis remain inconsistent. Systems to evaluate the impact of interventions and secure coherence are still developing, limiting leaders' ability to form a reliable whole-school view of progress. As current work matures, the school is well placed to bring emerging practice together into a coherent framework that enables more consistent and strategic use of data.

R2: Continue to develop staff's understanding of challenging behaviour in supporting pupils to regulate their emotions

The school has strengthened staff understanding of behaviour and emotional regulation through extensive professional learning in areas such as sensory needs, de-escalation, trauma-informed practice and therapeutic approaches. As a result, a more consistent whole-school approach to understanding and managing behaviour is emerging. Across all three sites, pupils generally behave well and engage positively in their learning. They benefit from clear routines, calm and supportive environments, and strong, trusting relationships with staff. Staff know pupils well and use warmth, humour and well-judged guidance to motivate them and promote increasing independence. Most pupils participate confidently in lessons and daily check-ins, demonstrating a growing maturity in recognising and expressing their emotions.

The school has made effective use of external expertise, particularly from occupational therapy, to deepen insight into the underlying causes of behaviour and broaden the range of strategies available to meet individual needs. Leaders have also refined transition arrangements, introducing phased, personalised induction processes that help new pupils settle successfully. Curriculum developments are supporting pupils to develop a clearer understanding of their own behaviours and to build self-regulation skills.

These improvements have contributed to reductions in exclusions and physical interventions. However, the limited scope and evaluation of behaviour-related data restrict leaders' ability to measure progress accurately and to demonstrate the full impact of their work in this area.

R3: Continue to strengthen arrangements to improve attendance

Leaders have sustained a strong focus on attendance across the school's three sites, maintaining consistent pastoral support through the family liaison officer, school social worker and wider team. Provision for pupils with low starting points is well planned, with gradual reintegration contributing to improved readiness to attend and learn.

Staff have a secure understanding of the complex factors affecting pupils' attendance and use personalised approaches, incentives and strong relationship-based work to re-engage pupils and families. Partnerships with CAMHS in-reach and other agencies further strengthen this wraparound support. Leaders monitor attendance closely and use information appropriately to target interventions. Curriculum developments, including vocational and experiential learning, have improved engagement for specific groups, and the school's integration policy has helped reduce exclusions.

Attendance outcomes show improvement overall, with notable gains for individual pupils. However, whole-school analysis can be disproportionately influenced by the small size of some cohorts, and leaders recognise the importance of presenting disaggregated data to provide a more accurate picture of progress. Despite these positive trends, systemic barriers, particularly around transport, continue to limit progress for a minority of learners.

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/6717008>

Yours sincerely



Dyfrig Ellis

Assistant Director