

A report on

Flint High School

**Maes Hyfryd
Y Fflint
Flintshire
CH6 5LL**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Flint High School

Name of provider	Flint High School
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	747
Pupils of statutory school age	681
Number in sixth form	66
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 20.3%)	25.1%
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 9.0%)	7.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.8%
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	04/02/2019
Start date of inspection	10/11/2025

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.

Summary

In recent years, the senior leadership team has failed to provide Flint High School with adequate leadership. As a result, the school does not provide its pupils with an acceptable standard of education. Systemic weaknesses in leadership, teaching and well-being provision mean that too few pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), feel safe in school, enjoy their learning or make sufficient progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Senior leaders have failed to secure a culture of safeguarding. Although many staff are committed to improving the well-being of pupils, overall the school does not support pupils' behaviour, attendance or engagement in their learning well enough. There are significant shortcomings in how attendance is recorded and monitored, how disruptive behaviour and bullying are managed and how well the school ensures that pupils are safe. As a result, the safety of pupils is a serious concern.

Senior leaders do not support the development of effective teaching successfully. In particular, they do not help teachers to manage pupils' behaviour well enough. Teachers are also hampered by a poorly designed curriculum and the inefficient deployment of staff. In a minority of cases, teaching helps pupils to make adequate progress and develop suitably positive attitudes to their learning. However, in many instances, low expectations, ineffective behaviour management and weak planning limit pupils' progress. Pupils do not develop their independence and resilience sufficiently well. Provision to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum is notably underdeveloped.

Leadership has limited impact on all aspects of the school's work and has not addressed national priorities well enough. It has failed to promote unity, trust and a sense of collaboration, and in too many instances fractured relationships between staff at all levels promote a culture of distrust. Insufficient attention is given to the well-being of staff and supporting middle leaders to carry out their roles effectively. As well as not demonstrating sufficient strategic leadership, senior leaders do not carry out their operational responsibilities successfully, so the school does not function efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

Senior leadership roles are not sufficiently clear, well-balanced or equitable. Senior leaders and governors do not hold staff accountable for their responsibilities. Leaders at all levels do not evaluate provision well enough, so are unable to plan for improvement satisfactorily. Professional learning to improve teaching and leadership is inadequate. The school does not manage its resources carefully enough, nor does it communicate or engage sufficiently well with parents and the local community.

Recommendations

We have made six recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Address the significant safeguarding issues identified during the inspection
- R2. Strengthen leadership so that it promotes unity, trust and collaboration and supports all staff to carry out their roles effectively
- R3. Strengthen arrangements for self-evaluation, improvement planning, professional learning and line management
- R4. Improve teaching and the provision for skills so that pupils are consistently challenged to make good progress
- R5. Improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning
- R6. Establish a curriculum that meets pupils' needs, provides a suitable range of learning experiences, and helps them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Significant shortcomings in leadership, curriculum planning, the quality of teaching and assessment, the provision for the development of pupils' skills and how well pupils are encouraged to engage in their learning have a notably negative impact on pupil progress. As a result, although a minority of pupils make adequate progress, many make limited progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Teaching does not have sufficient impact on pupils' progress. Although this is to some extent due to shortcomings in classroom practice, systemic failures in leadership create a significant barrier to teachers' capacity to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. For example, staff are often deployed in a manner that does not make best use of their experience and expertise. In addition, curriculum arrangements often make it difficult for staff to develop pupils' subject understanding and skills. Furthermore, limited support to help teachers address issues with pupil behaviour hampers how well they can deliver effective lessons.

In a minority of lessons, teachers develop suitable working relationships with their classes. They prepare engaging resources and plan activities that build appropriately on each other. In these lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions and ask suitable questions to check pupils' understanding. They provide appropriate verbal feedback. Where necessary, they manage pupils' behaviour appropriately.

In many instances, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, they set tasks that lack challenge. They are too accepting of pupils putting little effort into their work. In these cases, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop independence in their learning. Consequently, many rely too heavily on their teachers' support. The majority of pupils do not sustain their concentration throughout lessons. Many teachers do not manage class discussion well enough. Although a minority of pupils participate appropriately in these activities, the majority either do not listen to their peers or their teachers well enough, or they are reluctant to contribute.

Many teachers use limited questioning techniques, and do not encourage pupils to develop their verbal responses. They do not monitor pupils' progress closely enough, and as a result they fail to address misconceptions. In these lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with the verbal feedback they need. Written feedback has limited impact on pupils' progress. Teachers' comments are mostly overgenerous and do not provide pupils with clear enough guidance as to how they can improve their work. Only a very few pupils respond meaningfully to teachers' written feedback.

A few pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for their learning, and are keen to share their ideas. These pupils, when given the opportunity, work well in pairs or groups. However, a minority of pupils contribute to constant low-level disruption in lessons, do not pay attention to their teachers and complete little work. In a few instances, pupils' disruptive and disrespectful behaviour has a notably negative impact on learning. Overall, many teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough, and are not supported sufficiently to do so.

In a minority of lessons, teachers lack the specialist subject knowledge and background to support pupils' progress appropriately. In a minority of cases, teachers are not good language models. They do not help pupils to develop a suitable grasp of subject terminology, and, through their explanations and resources, do not model the correct use of language sufficiently well.

The planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills is underdeveloped. Opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to engage in paired or group discussions, develop their reading skills, and to write for a range of purposes and audiences are limited. Provision to support pupils with weaker skills is insufficient. As a result, pupils' do not develop their literacy skills well enough.

Around half of pupils listen attentively to their teachers and peers during lessons. However, only a minority contribute verbally to lessons, and those who do generally speak with limited clarity and confidence. Too often, teachers accept responses that are brief and underdeveloped, without probing further or encouraging pupils to elaborate.

In English lessons, teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their basic reading skills. Many pupils annotate texts suitably and the majority infer meaning from written and visual materials appropriately. However, many pupils find it difficult to compare texts accurately and lack precision when analysing them. For example, they rarely use technical language or refer to structural features.

When given the opportunity, a few pupils produce well-structured and engaging pieces of writing. They demonstrate ambitious vocabulary choices, vary sentence structures effectively and use a range of punctuation accurately. However, across the curriculum, the majority of pupils frequently make careless basic errors. They struggle to organise their ideas logically and independently and do not adopt the correct format or tone for the purpose or audience. In general, pupils do not plan, improve, or redraft their work effectively.

The majority of pupils have suitable basic number skills. A minority work suitably with basic area and perimeter and a few calculate the areas of more complex shapes. However, pupils do not develop their understanding of mathematics and numeracy concepts well

enough, especially between Year 7 and Year 9. In addition, a lack of strategic planning means that pupils have limited opportunities across the curriculum to apply and develop their skills in meaningful, authentic contexts. As a result, most cannot work with a suitable range of mathematical concepts and make limited progress in developing and applying their numeracy skills.

There is no strategic leadership or coordination of the progressive development of pupils' digital skills. As a result, pupils have very few opportunities to develop this aspect of their work.

Many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. The majority make broadly suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills in lessons. However, a minority make limited progress, particularly in oracy. The majority produce short pieces of writing in Welsh using a suitable range of vocabulary and read and annotate basic texts suitably. At key stage 4, a few produce accurate extended pieces. However, many pupils rely too heavily on structures and scaffolding and lack confidence to attempt to speak or write in Welsh independently. Only around half of pupils gain a level 2 qualification in Welsh, and a minority are not entered for a suitable qualification in the language.

Leaders are beginning to strengthen pupils' appreciation of Welsh language and culture by working to increase the use of Welsh by staff, supporting the 'Criw Cymraeg' and promoting 'Welsh Wednesdays' and 'Shwmae Su'mae' day celebrations. However, this aspect of the school's work is in the early stages of development.

Senior leaders have failed to provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs. Poor curriculum planning limits teachers' ability to provide learning experiences that build suitably on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Senior leadership decisions regarding the curriculum often have a negative impact on pupils' learning experiences. For example, large class sizes mean that staff are not able to offer pupils in Years 7 and 9 access to practical work in design technology, nor are pupils able to participate in the full range of experiences in this subject area, such as food or textiles.

The sixth form curriculum is delivered in partnership with a local school. This has enabled the school to offer a comprehensive range of subjects for these pupils. The curriculum offer at Key Stage 4 does not meet pupils' needs well enough. Pupils are allocated to one of three pathways without suitable consultation or sufficient consideration of their interests and aspirations. As a result, access to certain subjects for particular groups of pupils is inequitable. Overall, the range of subjects on offer to pupils at Key Stage 4 is not sufficiently broad.

There are a few suitable opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities outside of lesson time, and there is a small range of enrichment trips and visits. However, overall,

provision for extra-curricular experiences is limited. This has a negative impact on pupils' ability to develop their social and cultural awareness and their sense of belonging and community.

The school has worked to make personal and social education (PSE) programme an integral part of the curriculum. It engages productively with a range of external partners to enhance this provision, and uses pupil feedback to ensure that topics are relevant. However, overall, provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, as well as their awareness of diversity, is underdeveloped.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

The well-being of pupils and staff at Flint High School is a cause for significant concern. Leaders have failed to establish an acceptable culture of safeguarding, and while the arrangements around child protection are generally suitable, the wider processes and systems intended to keep pupils safe are not effective. Around half of pupils report that they do not feel safe in school, and the majority of parents who responded to our questionnaire say that they have concerns about the safety of their children.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive appropriate child protection training relevant to their roles. Many know how to respond to any safeguarding concerns. However, a few are not clear enough about the processes involved in this important aspect of the school's work. Leaders work appropriately with external agencies when making child protection referrals, and the school has suitable arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff.

Form time activities and assemblies, planned by middle leaders, are intended to support pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. However, there are inconsistencies in the planning and delivery of these activities, and senior leaders do not have a strategic overview of this aspect of the school's work. Leaders work with a suitable range of external agencies, including the local health board, North Wales Police and local charities, to support pupils' understanding of specific well-being themes.

The notably high number of bullying incidents is a significant concern. There are inconsistencies in how well staff record and deal with these incidents, and pupils and parents often feel that bullying is not addressed effectively. Senior leaders do not have sufficient oversight of bullying in the school and do not analyse available data well enough, for example to understand the number of incidents linked to protected characteristics.

Senior leaders have recently changed systems and processes in an attempt to better manage pupil behaviour, including introducing more consistent classroom routines and a range of interventions for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. However, the school's new approach has not been made clear enough to staff and is not applied

consistently. The poor behaviour of some pupils, both in lessons and around the school, is having a negative impact on many pupils. In particular, this poor behaviour hinders progress in lessons and contributes to pupils feeling unsafe around the school. The majority of staff feel that senior leaders and school systems do not support them well in dealing with challenging behaviour. While the pastoral team is committed to supporting pupils' well-being and works hard to manage behaviour, the school's overall strategic approach is ineffective and contributes to wider concerns about the culture of safeguarding.

The number of fixed-term exclusions is notably high, and this figure does not include pupils sent home because of poor behaviour without being formally excluded. Senior leaders do this routinely, which contravenes Welsh Government guidance and is a significant safeguarding concern. The 'Well-being Room' supports vulnerable pupils' emotional well-being beneficially. However, in general, provision for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour is unsuitable and has little impact.

Pupil attendance is declining and is a notable concern. Although the school has a suitable plan for a graduated response to tackle poor attendance, it is applied inconsistently. Senior leaders do not monitor attendance closely enough, and there are inconsistencies in how attendance is recorded. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate oversight of overall attendance or a secure understanding of which pupils are in school at any given time.

There are significant concerns around internal truancy, and the school's current approaches to addressing this issue are ineffective. Consequently, leaders do not always know where pupils are or whether they are safe during the school day. Senior leaders also have limited knowledge of the attendance of pupils accessing alternative off-site provisions. Despite this, these pupils are recorded as present every day. Senior leaders do not have a clear understanding of which pupils are on reduced timetables and whether all of these pupils have appropriate pastoral support plans, which assess risk and consider any potential safeguarding concerns. Processes to monitor which sixth form pupils are on the school site are not robust. Overall, these inaccuracies and inconsistencies are serious safeguarding concerns.

The ALN team is committed to providing the best possible experiences for pupils with additional learning needs. They know their pupils well and work with parents and carers to identify suitable support. The team holds useful review meetings, and Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and one-page profiles include appropriate targets that are reviewed regularly. Pupils access worthwhile literacy and numeracy support through the 'Learning Zone', and staff use data suitably to identify needs and track progress. Although the ALN team shares helpful information with teachers, leaders do not evaluate how well teachers use this information to support learning. 'Enhanced Provision' classes meet the

needs of pupils requiring bespoke provision effectively, with teachers and support staff working well together to help pupils make sound progress in lessons within this provision.

There are a few opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills, including through the school council, the Criw Cymraeg and subject leadership groups. When given the opportunity, pupil leaders have contributed to discussions about aspects of the school's work. However senior leaders have not empowered the school council and other pupil groups to make a meaningful impact on school life.

The school works suitably with Careers Wales to support pupils, including those with additional learning needs, at key transition points. However, a minority of parents who responded to our questionnaire feel that the school does not support pupils' transition into Year 7 well enough.

Leading and improving

Relationships between leaders and staff in Flint High School are significantly damaged. Senior leaders do not communicate well enough with pupils, parents or staff. As a result, levels of trust between all stakeholders are low. The senior leadership team has failed to establish an ethos of collaboration and support and, overall, the school is notably dysfunctional. This impacts negatively on all aspects of the school's work.

Leadership has had no impact on improving important areas such as the quality of teaching, provision for skills and the establishment of a positive safeguarding culture. In addition, there has been a limited focus on addressing national priorities, such as improving attendance and tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Although the Key Stage 4 outcomes of pupils eligible for free school meals have improved slightly in recent years, overall they do not compare well with those in similar schools.

The headteacher's vision for the school is not shared with or understood by staff. Senior leaders have neither secured a strategic approach to school improvement, nor do they deal well enough with operational matters that affect the day to day running of the school. There has been little consideration of how to support the well-being of staff. As a result, they often do not feel valued or listened to. In addition, the deployment of teaching staff is not strategically planned for the benefit of pupils or to maximise the impact of the curriculum.

Too many leaders do not understand or discharge their roles appropriately. Senior leadership roles are not equitably distributed, and there is not enough clarity regarding their responsibilities. Although senior leaders recognise that there are a number of notable shortcomings in the school's work, they have not taken sufficient responsibility for or secured improvement in any of these areas.

Line management processes are weak, and leaders at all levels are not supported or challenged well enough. Middle leaders care passionately about pupils' success and are committed to securing improvements. However, senior leaders do not help them to carry out their roles effectively. Professional learning to improve teaching and leadership is inadequate and has little impact on the school's provision.

Recently, the school has attempted to revise processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning. Despite this, there is no meaningful consideration of the impact of provision on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, or their well-being. Leaders do not evaluate with sufficient rigour in order to identify specific strengths and areas that require improvement. This means that improvement planning is too broad, and it is often unclear how or when leaders monitor the impact of any of their work. Weaknesses in improvement planning at all levels have hindered the school's ability to bring about any meaningful improvements since the last core inspection. Middle leaders' role in evaluation and improvement is underdeveloped. This restricts their ability to lead and improve their areas of responsibility.

Governors are keen supporters of the school and are proud to be part of its community. However, their role in supporting and challenging senior leaders to improve important aspects is notably underdeveloped. They are too accepting of information provided to them by the headteacher and as a result they do not have a clear enough understanding of the school's current position. Although governors and the business manager monitor school finances regularly, there is not a strategic approach to financial planning. The impact of spending, including the use of the pupil development grant, is not evaluated. As a result, resources are not targeted on the areas in most need of improvement.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern

A site management concern was raised during the inspection, and the local authority has been notified

The school does not have appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and governors do not manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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.

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