

**A report on**  
**Milford Haven School**

**Steynton Road  
Milford Haven  
Pembrokeshire  
SA73 1AE**

**Date of inspection: November 2025**

**by**

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

## About Milford Haven School

Name of provider	Milford Haven School
Local authority	Pembrokeshire 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	1045
Pupils of statutory school age	1045
Number in sixth form	*
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%)	21.7%
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%)	7.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.2%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.9%
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	05/03/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27/11/2017

Start date of inspection	17/11/2025
--------------------------	------------

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](https://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

Milford Haven School is a caring and inclusive community. The House system and a range of nurture and pastoral provisions promote a sense of belonging and support for pupils. However, there are important shortcomings in a significant minority of lessons. In these cases, pupils do not make enough progress in their understanding or their literacy and numeracy skills.

Although leaders have offered some worthwhile professional learning opportunities for staff on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop these skills across the curriculum. Generally, teachers do not offer pupils enough opportunities to develop their speaking skills and their advanced reading skills. The majority of pupils make frequent basic errors in their work and these errors are not addressed regularly enough. The majority of pupils have basic numeracy skills but do not make enough progress in their numeracy skills over time. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their digital, Welsh and wider skills across the curriculum.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, that has been developed appropriately. Transition arrangements with partner primary schools are helpful. Enrichment activities are valued by pupils, though attendance at some activities is low, especially during the asymmetric weeks' enrichment provision on Friday afternoons.

Staff respond promptly to reported incidents of bullying, and restorative approaches are used to help pupils rebuild relationships. Most pupils say they do not experience bullying and feel safe, listened to and supported. In 2024-25, whole school attendance is below that of similar schools and remains well below pre-pandemic levels. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the Wales average. Safeguarding training is regular, ensuring staff and governors are informed about their responsibilities. However, there is an insufficient number of toilets accessible for pupils during the school day.

Leaders promote positive behaviour effectively. However, generally, evaluations of teaching and learning tend to be overly positive and improvement planning lacks precision. Senior leaders do not consistently challenge middle leaders sufficiently, especially in terms of improving teaching and learning. Leadership has not had enough impact on improving teaching, learning, attendance or skills' development. Although governors and leaders monitor spending regularly, the school has a substantial deficit. The school's strategies to prevent poverty impacting negatively on pupils' well-being and achievement are appropriate. The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with similar schools, though their attendance remains too low.

## Recommendations

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

- R1      Improve the provision for pupils' toilets and ensure that there is a sufficient number and that they are accessible
- R2      Strengthen the precision and rigour of self-evaluation, improvement processes and line management
- R3      Improve teaching so that pupils are consistently challenged to make good progress
- R4      Strengthen the co-ordination and delivery of provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
- R5      Improve attendance
- R6      Ensure robust financial management

## 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 which shows 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

#### Teaching and progress

In the majority of cases, teaching enables pupils to make suitable progress. However, in a significant minority of instances, shortcomings in teaching mean that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Many teachers forge a close and supportive working relationship with pupils. These teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and are suitable language models. In the majority of lessons, pupils, including those with ALN, make suitable progress in their learning from their starting points. They engage purposefully in activities and demonstrate a commitment to improving their work. In these lessons, teachers:

- establish helpful routines that enable them to manage pupils' behaviour appropriately
- have suitable expectations of pupils' progress
- plan appropriately for pupils' learning and design tasks to support progress
- provide clear explanations

In the very few lessons where pupils make strong progress in their learning, they are often inspired by their teachers' enthusiasm. In these lessons, teachers adapt the pace of lessons skilfully in response to pupils' learning and ask incisive questions that probe learning and develop thinking.

In a significant minority of lessons, shortcomings in teaching mean that pupils make only limited progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In these cases, teachers:

- do not have high enough expectations of pupils' progress
- do not plan well enough for the progressive development of pupils' subject knowledge and skills
- offer activities that are lacking in challenge
- do not use a wide enough range of questioning techniques in order to develop pupils' oracy or their independent thinking skills

In a majority of lessons, pupils demonstrate fairly positive attitudes to learning. Many listen respectfully to their teachers, follow instructions and are supportive of their peers. In a minority of cases, mainly as a result of shortcomings in teaching, a lack of perseverance and interest is evident.

Generally, the quality of written feedback does not enable pupils to improve their work well enough. Too often, important spelling and grammatical errors in pupils' work are not identified.

## **Skills**

Leaders responsible for planning for the development of pupils' skills have offered some useful professional learning and strategies for teaching staff to use to develop pupils' skills. However, strategies to improve pupils' oracy, reading, writing and numeracy skills are not implemented consistently in relevant departments across the curriculum. The impact of professional learning to develop pupils' skills is not evaluated robustly enough. Overall, the provision to support the development of pupils' skills is not co-ordinated well enough and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

## **Literacy**

When given the opportunity, the majority of pupils discuss their learning sensibly with each other and use relevant subject-specific terminology when appropriate. A very few pupils use sophisticated vocabulary to explain their thinking in detail, supporting their ideas with relevant evidence, for example when describing the inspiration behind their exam compositions in art. However, a minority of pupils make incorrect language choices in lessons and a few are reluctant to respond. Too often, teachers do not challenge pupils to develop their verbal responses.

Leaders have introduced appropriate strategies to promote a culture of reading across the school and this has included improving the school library. Pupils read a varied range of relevant texts across the curriculum. Many pupils apply their basic reading skills suitably when highlighting and selecting relevant words and phrases from texts. More able pupils show a sound understanding of how a character feels when discussing specific phrases from a novel and inferring emotions from these. When opportunities arise, around half of pupils synthesise information suitably from historical sources and a few analyse the reliability of these sources effectively. However, many reading tasks only require pupils to locate basic information and there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their advanced reading skills.

With support, many pupils write in appropriate detail about their opinions, structuring their work suitably and referring to relevant information, for example when considering how the media portrays religions or evaluating their design and technology projects. A very few pupils write fluently in detail, structuring their writing logically and engaging the reader through well-chosen vocabulary and varied sentence types. However, the majority of pupils regularly make basic errors in their work, including a few more able pupils. For example, they do not capitalise names, omit punctuation, do not check subject-verb

agreement or make regular spelling errors. These mistakes reduce their ability to communicate clearly, even where they have interesting points to make.

In general, too many pupils rely heavily on support from their teachers to structure and develop their writing suitably. There are only a few worthwhile opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum, such as when they write about gender equality in sociology or evaluate the extent to which Primark operates sustainably in business studies. In addition, in a few instances, writing tasks do not develop subject specific skills well enough. A minority of pupils have weak handwriting skills.

## **Cymraeg**

Staff promote the advantages of learning the Welsh language well. Leaders have started working productively with local primary schools to promote the importance of bilingualism. The annual school Eisteddfod, Welsh language workshops and 'Shwmae Su'mae' week enhance pupils' experiences of Welsh language and culture.

Many pupils have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh and, generally, they make suitable progress in their language skills. A few lack confidence when speaking Welsh. The majority of pupils pronounce basic Welsh words correctly and hold short conversations in Welsh with their peers. When given the opportunity, they read sentences and short paragraphs aloud confidently. Around half of the pupils write with an appropriate level of accuracy overall. These pupils adapt their writing for different audiences and purposes effectively, for example when writing a letter to the headteacher regarding the use of mobile phones in school. However, around half of pupils rely too heavily on sentence starters and word banks provided by the teacher when writing in a more extended manner in Welsh.

## **Numeracy**

In mathematics lessons, the majority of pupils work confidently with the four rules of number and apply this knowledge suitably, for example to find the  $n$ th term of a sequence, finding fractions of quantities and solving two step equations. Pupils apply the laws of indices to simplify expressions and use analogue/digital time to solve problems involving local bus timetables and international time zones. Most pupils plot bar graphs suitably. A minority of older pupils solve simultaneous equations confidently and use the relationship between mass, density and volume to solve real-life problems. Appropriate methods for checking pupils' understanding of concepts, such as frequent questioning and individual whiteboards, are used effectively throughout the subject area. However, the majority of pupils do not build well enough on their prior learning and there are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their numeracy skills.



## **Other skills**

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their digital skills during digital technology lessons and in subjects across the curriculum. For example, they create short animations using specialist software, investigate the properties of straight line graphs and have worthwhile opportunities to develop their coding skills including creating a magic 8 ball game.

Across the curriculum, pupils have suitable opportunities to develop their creative, physical and thinking skills. For example, in their Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) lessons, pupils think carefully about big questions such as whether war can ever be justified and how the media presents religion.

## **Curriculum**

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils have a considerable amount of curriculum time during the extended morning registration period to develop their personal, social and emotional skills. This time is also used for a variety of other activities, such as developing pupils' reading and Welsh language skills. However, the quality of teaching in these sessions is too variable and this limits their impact.

The school's approach to Curriculum for Wales has evolved sensibly over time. Directors of Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE) are now positive about the increased potential for cross-curricular links and creating a more relevant and authentic learning experience for pupils. Teachers make suitable use of the local area to support pupils' learning, for example by visiting the nearby mosque and considering why Milford Haven is not part of Pembrokeshire national park.

The school offers a wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11, including vocational courses such as engineering, hospitality and catering and King's Trust, alongside traditional GCSE subjects. The school has helpful links with partner primary schools to support transition.

The school develops pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness suitably through health and well-being sessions, religion, values and ethics lessons and school assemblies. The programme is well planned to cover all aspects of the personal and social education (PSE) framework. The school makes good use of the expertise of external organisations, such as the police, fire safety, Hywel Dda health board and local charities, to support this provision. Leaders respond rapidly to local information and feedback from pupils to adapt the PSE curriculum. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, for example through celebrating Black history month across the curriculum and reading the novel, 'Windrush Boy'. Most pupils say that the school encourages them to respect others.

Many pupils say that the school provides helpful information and advice to help them consider their next steps, such as how to apply for a job and write a personal statement. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 benefit from being interviewed by the careers' adviser and attending careers' fairs at the local college. There is also a range of rich opportunities for pupils to develop entrepreneurship skills and work with a few local businesses.

The school runs suitable educational visits to support the curriculum, such as a theatre visit to a recent performance of 'A Woman in Black'. Many pupils say that the school encourages them to participate in enrichment activities. They include worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and extend their experiences. For example, this year's school production of 'Be Our Guest' was written and choreographed by pupils. Although many of these activities are well attended, only a very few pupils attend those sessions which occur on Friday afternoons as part of the asymmetric week.

### **Well-being, care, support and guidance**

Milford Haven School has a caring and supportive ethos. Staff know pupils and their families well, which helps them to support pupils' well-being effectively. The House system makes a valuable contribution to the school's sense of community. Leaders have worked proactively to embed the 'rights of the child' and strengthen provision for young carers, helping to foster an inclusive school culture.

Leaders have introduced a range of helpful provisions, such as nurture rooms and pastoral support, which offer calm and structured environments to help pupils regulate their emotions and sustain their involvement in learning. The nurture team provides valuable care to help pupils develop their confidence and readiness to learn. Pastoral teams are dedicated to helping pupils overcome barriers to learning, particularly those eligible for free school meals, and provide comprehensive care, support and guidance.

A wide range of graduated behaviour strategies collectively support pupils' motivation and engagement in their learning. Staff and pupils have collaborated effectively to revise the mobile phone policy and develop an appropriate system for recognising positive behaviour. Rewards for good attendance and behaviour, alongside recognition of pupils' contributions to school and community life, are beginning to strengthen a culture of positivity across the school. The engagement team works effectively to support pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour, helping them to reflect on their actions and make positive changes. As a result, many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, demonstrating courtesy and co-operation.

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) team builds positive relationships with pupils and understands their needs well. Within 'The Bay', staff provide a nurturing environment to support pupils with ALN to make progress from their starting points. There are suitable

interventions to help pupils with ALN to develop their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have responded appropriately to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. One-page profiles and individual development plans take good account of the views of pupils and their parents or carers. They provide useful information and strategies to help staff understand how to best support pupils and help them learn, although these are not always used well enough by all teachers.

The school works proactively to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including in areas such as e-safety and healthy relationships. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to secure pupils' safety and well-being. Staff deal with reported incidents of bullying promptly. The restorative approaches help pupils understand conflict, address it appropriately and rebuild relationships. Most pupils say they do not experience bullying.

Leaders, the governing body and staff work together to promote a suitable safeguarding culture within the school. Bespoke and regular safeguarding training is provided to all staff and governors, which ensures that they remain up to date with current requirements and are confident in fulfilling their responsibilities. The weekly safeguarding updates provide helpful information to staff which enables them to keep pupils safe. Staff respond appropriately and in a timely manner to any concerns pupils share with them, ensuring that many pupils feel safe, listened to and supported. However, the provision and accessibility of toilets for pupils during the school day is limited and there is an insufficient number of toilets available.

Pupils and parents value the thoughtful arrangements to support pupils' transition into Year 7, as well as when they choose their options in Year 9, and plan their future pathway after Year 11. Pupils have access to an extensive range of enrichment activities, which include opportunities to develop their interests in art, sport, music and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) both during and after the school day.

Since the pandemic, school attendance has declined significantly. Whole school attendance regressed between 2022/23 and 2023/24. In 2024-25, attendance remained lower than that of similar schools and the Wales average. Although the school monitors attendance appropriately and provides suitable interventions, pupils' attendance remains well below pre-pandemic levels. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than that of these pupils in similar schools and the Wales average. The attendance of girls is notably lower than boys' attendance. The number of pupils who are persistently absent remains higher in comparison with similar schools.

The school provides a broad range of opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership responsibilities in roles such as house captains or senior prefects. 'Anti-bullying

champions' and the 'Safeguardians' are trained to support their peers. Pupil leaders work collaboratively and successfully on key projects, including Children in Need week, and the school's in house summer festival, 'MHS HouseFest'.

### **Leading and improving**

The headteacher is committed to raising the aspirations and achievement of all pupils in a supportive and inspiring environment. Leaders have influenced positively a few key areas of the school's work such as improving pupil behaviour and the attainment of vulnerable pupils. However, leadership has not had enough impact on other important aspects such as the overall quality of teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and the provision for the progressive development of their skills.

Senior leadership roles are allocated sensibly but increasing financial constraints mean that senior leaders have to take on additional responsibilities. Although senior leaders offer appropriate support to the headteacher, their work is not evaluated robustly enough. Senior leaders do not challenge middle leaders sufficiently to secure the necessary improvements to teaching and learning.

Most leaders do not consider the impact provision has on pupils' learning. They are over-reliant on Year 11 performance data and do not consider closely enough the progress pupils make in books and lessons. This means their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning tend to be overly positive.

Processes to develop the performance of staff are appropriate. Staff appreciate the wide range of broadly relevant professional learning opportunities that are available to them. However, these are often not aligned closely enough to the aspects in most need of improvement. As a result, they have not led to sufficient improvements in the quality of teaching. The school's own evaluation of professional learning is underdeveloped as it is not linked sufficiently to its impact on learning.

Senior leaders carry out a broad range of suitable quality assurance activities. This provides them with a general understanding of the main strengths and areas for development. However, there is too much variation in how precisely they plan for specific improvements. Middle leaders also undertake suitable evaluation and improvement activities but are not held to account well enough for the impact of their actions. This hinders their ability to lead and improve their areas of responsibility. Overall, improvement processes are cumbersome and weaknesses in improvement planning at all levels hinder the school's ability to bring about improvements.

Governors are highly committed supporters of the school and understand their role as critical friends well. Their view of certain aspects of the school's work, particularly teaching, is occasionally overly positive, but generally, they are well informed and

challenge leaders appropriately. Facing a substantial deficit budget, the headteacher and business manager, supported ably by the governing body, have made substantial savings in expenditure. This has impacted negatively upon the school's proposed curriculum offer and the distribution of leadership responsibilities, including the day to day running of the school. Despite these savings, the school is still unable to set a balanced in-year budget.

The school has implemented a range of appropriate strategies to prevent poverty impacting upon the well-being and achievement of vulnerable pupils. It makes appropriate use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant. Over the last three years, the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with that of their counterparts in similar schools in terms of their Year 11 qualifications. However, their attendance has not improved sufficiently and remains too low.

### **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 has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

The school currently has a large deficit budget.

The pupil development grant is used appropriately.

## **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.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

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

© Crown Copyright 2026: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 22/01/2026