

Idris Davies School 3 - 18
Mill Field
Abertysswg
Rhymney
NP22 5XF

19/12/2025

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: December 2025

Thank you for your support during the interim visit to the school on the 11th and 12th of December 2025. We valued the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils, and hear more about the improvement work the school has undertaken since the core inspection.

During the visit we had the opportunity to:

- Talk with pupils and hear their feedback about the school.
- Visit a sample of sessions across the curriculum to see pupils and staff undertaking their work.
- Undertake lesson observations and work scrutiny activities alongside leaders.
- Speak with senior leaders about their improvement work and how they have adapted approaches in the areas of focus.
- Speak with middle leaders about their work and hear about the benefits and challenges they are experiencing.
- Look at the work the school is doing to improve opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, in particular advanced reading and extended writing and how you have made improvements to the quality of teaching across the school.

Thank you again for all your help to plan and arrange our visit. We wish you well with future developments.

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

Focus of visit

How effective is the planning for developing pupils' extended writing and advanced reading skills?

Since the core inspection, we heard how leaders have established a clear whole-school approach to strengthening pupils' literacy skills, with a strong emphasis on developing advanced reading and extended writing skills. They appear to have communicated these expectations effectively as staff demonstrate a shared understanding of agreed approaches. Leaders and staff told us how they have received purposeful professional learning activities which have led to improved confidence and consistency in planning for extended writing and reading activities. We heard how collaboration across phases and departments supports a shared approach and consistent use of agreed strategies.

It was interesting to hear how leaders monitor provision and pupil progress, drawing on a range of evidence to evaluate impact. They shared examples of how they have adapted plans, including providing further professional learning where needed. As a result, it seems that planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills is strengthening.

We think it might be helpful for you to consider:

- How can the school further refine established reading and writing strategies to ensure strong and sustained progress across the phases?
- How can staff implement a whole-school strategy to improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation?

What is the quality of teaching across the school?

Since the core inspection, senior leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching and assessment. During the visit, we heard how staff have benefitted from professional learning opportunities and the sharing of good practice. Staff spoke positively about the school's joint professional development groups and coaching programme. There appears to be an increasingly reflective culture where staff are keen to develop their practice further.

During the small samples of lessons seen, it was positive to see the highly supportive learning environment which teachers have nurtured, and the productive and positive working relationship between them and their pupils. High expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement were evident. In most cases, the teachers observed had planned a variety of worthwhile and interesting activities to support pupils' learning and progress. Many monitored pupils' progress well during lessons and provided them with helpful verbal feedback.

During the visit, we heard how staff across all phases have focussed on improving the levels of challenge in lessons, for example through the types of tasks teachers set and the engaging range of teaching and learning resources they use. It was interesting to hear that, more recently, teachers have begun presenting more challenging questions for pupils to consider when carrying out reading activities. We saw examples of pupils of all abilities beginning to think more deeply around topics. However, leaders recognise that there is still work to do in this area, and we agree that increasing levels of challenge, for example through thoughtful and probing questioning, is an area for further development across the phases.

We also heard about the steps leaders have taken to review and improve assessment and feedback practices. These have enabled departments and phases to use underpinning principles to reflect on and refine their assessment and feedback approaches. While these actions are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teacher feedback, there is still variation in how effective and impactful it is. From the small sample of pupils' work considered, there was inconsistency in the opportunities for pupils to respond to and engage with feedback.

We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

- How can teachers ensure that pupils engage meaningfully with written feedback to maximise its impact on learning and pupils' progression?
- How can professional learning continue to support teachers in developing their questioning skills?

The school'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/6765500>

Yours sincerely



Lowri Jones

Acting Assistant Director