

Willows High School
Willows Avenue
Tremorfa
CF24 2YE

05/02/2026

Dear leaders and staff,

Interim visit: January 2026

Thank you for your support with the arrangements for the interim visit to the school. We valued the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils to discuss the improvement work the school has carried out since the core inspection.

During the visit we had the opportunity to:

- Meet with pupils and hear their feedback about the school.
- Visit a sample of lessons across the curriculum to see pupils and staff undertaking their work.
- Undertake lesson observations and work scrutiny activities alongside senior and middle leaders.
- Speak with senior leader and middle leaders about your improvement work and how you have worked to address the recommendations from the core inspection.

Focus of visit

Ensure that self-evaluation processes are precise and focus on impact and that all leaders use these processes effectively to plan for and secure improvement

During the visit, it was useful to discuss how the school has carefully considered the points raised in the core inspection. It was interesting to hear how leaders have taken a range of steps to strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning. As a result, they now are beginning to focus more closely on evaluating the progress pupils make in learning rather than compliance with school policies.

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

We heard how leaders at all levels now use a wider range of first-hand evidence to inform their evaluations. Middle leaders informed us that they value the professional learning they receive to become more confident when evaluating learning. They also noted that they appreciated the collaborative approach and modelling by senior leaders. It was helpful to know the steps leaders at all levels are taking to strengthen their evaluations.

We heard about the schools' work in supporting leaders to ensure that their evaluations are more precise. Leaders noted that they would continue to support and monitor how consistently staff at all levels evaluate the impact of teaching on learning.

It may be helpful for the school to consider:

- What further can leaders do to focus self-evaluation sharply on pupils' learning and skills?
- How will you continue to strengthen the support for leaders to plan more precisely for improvement?

Increase the number of pupils who complete a Welsh language GCSE qualification and improve pupils' Welsh language speaking skills

During our visit, we learned about the school's work to increase opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh-language speaking skills. In our discussions, Welsh teachers explained how they have introduced more opportunities for pupils to practise spoken Welsh through language reinforcement activities such as 'Rydw i'n dweud / Rydych chi'n dweud' and paired discussion tasks like 'Trafod a throi'. This aligns with the school's wider teaching and learning strategy to strengthen speaking skills.

During our meeting with the pupil group 'Criw Cymraeg', we heard how members are increasingly promoting the Welsh language and culture across the school. It was pleasing to hear how the group supports the Welsh department in promoting Welsh culture events such as the annual Eisteddfod and 'Dydd Miwsig Cymru'. We also heard how the school has strengthened its links with external organisations, including the Urdd, by arranging Welsh-language activities.

We learned how the school is supporting staff to develop their Welsh-language skills, ensuring that they feel confident using Welsh phrases and commands in lessons, as well as conversational Welsh in corridors when greeting pupils and colleagues.

In the Welsh lessons we visited, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes towards developing their Welsh-language skills and clearly enjoyed their learning. It was also positive to hear that nearly all current Year 10 pupils are following the new GCSE Core Cymraeg qualification.

It may be helpful for the school consider:

- How can leaders work strategically to further develop and evaluate this area of the school's work?
- How can the school ensure that all staff model the Welsh language effectively as part of daily routines?
- How can the school encourage more pupils to join the 'Criw Cymraeg'?

The team valued the welcome and the professional dialogue with the school during their visit. Thank you again for your help to plan and arrange this visit.

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/6814041>

Yours sincerely



Lowri Jones

Acting Assistant Director