

**A report on**

**Llantwit Major School**

**Ham Lane East  
Llantwit Major  
CF61 1TQ**

**Date of inspection: February 2026**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Llantwit Major School

Name of provider	Llantwit Major School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	980
Pupils of statutory school age	834
Number in sixth form	145
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%)	18.8%
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%)	10.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.2%
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/03/2017

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Start date of inspection	23/02/2026
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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

Although staff at Llantwit Major School care for their pupils there are important shortcomings in many aspects of the school's work. Since her appointment, in response to long term instability in senior leadership, the headteacher has implemented a range of strategies aimed at securing improvements. This has included recently appointing a new senior leadership team. However, these actions have had a limited impact on improving aspects such as teaching, curriculum and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The quality of teaching is not effective enough and pupils make suitable progress in only around half of lessons. In these lessons, teachers engage pupils appropriately, have sound expectations and plan suitably to build on pupils' prior learning. However, in around half of lessons, poor teaching means that pupils make only limited progress. In these instances, teachers have too low expectations of their pupils, plan tasks for pupils to do rather than thinking about how to improve their learning and often provide too much support, limiting pupils' independent learning skills.

Despite some recent improvements in attendance, rates of attendance remain notably below those of similar schools and the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals in particular is too low. The school provides a generally caring and supportive environment where many pupils say that they feel safe. However, pupils' behaviour within and outside of lessons often disrupts learning and too frequently pupils are allowed to remain passive in lessons. This is having a negative impact on pupils' progress.

The school's curriculum is not supporting the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding well enough. Staff do not plan sufficiently for the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in the sixth form have access to a broad range of subjects and are positive about how they are supported to engage with their first choices. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a broad range of GCSE subjects but there are only a limited number of vocational subjects available for pupils to choose. A large number of pupils access long-term external provisions for part of their time at school and the arrangements for this are insufficiently robust.

Leaders at all levels do not evaluate their work with sufficient precision. They focus on compliance with school policies rather than the impact that provision has on pupils' learning and well-being. The headteacher has taken appropriate steps to align senior leaders' roles and responsibilities to whole school priorities but it is not always clear who leads on specific aspects and leaders at all levels are not held to account robustly enough. The governors, business manager and headteacher monitor the school

budget regularly but the planning of school finances is not strategic enough. The school is currently operating in a deficit budget, which is projected to increase notably over the next few years.

## Recommendations

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

- R1 Address the safeguarding issue identified during the inspection
- R2 Ensure leaders at all levels understand and carry out their roles effectively and that they are sufficiently held to account
- R3 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes so that they focus clearly on the impact of provision on pupils' progress and well-being
- R4 Improve curriculum provision and the quality of teaching so that all pupils make strong progress
- R5 Strengthen the co-ordination of the provision to support the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For literacy in particular:
  - improve pupils' speaking and advanced reading skills
  - ensure a consistently robust approach to improving the technical accuracy of pupils' writing
- R6 Improve attendance, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
- R7 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

The quality of teaching at Llantwit Major School is too variable. Frequently, this has a negative impact on pupils' engagement in their learning and the progress that they make.

When teaching engages them successfully, pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Many behave well in these lessons, demonstrating respect for their teachers and peers. However, behaviour both within and outside of lessons often disrupts learning. Too often, pupils are allowed to remain passive and are not challenged by their teachers to engage in their learning.

In around half of instances, pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make suitable progress in developing their subject knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, teachers:

- plan suitably for learning and support pupils to build on their prior learning
- have appropriate expectations of pupils' engagement and progress and establish helpful classroom routines that support pupils to engage well at the beginning of lessons
- use questioning suitably to test pupils' understanding and recall

In the very few cases where pupils make strong progress, teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan carefully for their learning. They provide clear explanations, demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject and use a range of engaging resources. They adapt the pace of lessons skilfully in response to pupils' learning and ask questions that probe and develop their thinking.

In around half of lessons, shortcomings in teaching mean that pupils make limited progress. In these lessons, teachers:

- have low expectations of what pupils can achieve and do not intervene when they are not engaged in learning
- plan for what they want pupils to do rather than what they want them to learn
- do not match the pace of lessons well enough to pupils' learning
- provide too much direction or over-structure work, limiting pupils' development of independent learning skills

Although the school has taken steps to strengthen the quality of feedback, the quality and impact of this is too variable. Around half of teachers circulate their classrooms to provide appropriate verbal feedback, but only a minority provide feedback precise enough to help pupils make meaningful improvements to their work.

Many pupils in the sixth form have positive attitudes towards their learning and engage suitably in class activities. They are keen to improve their learning and discuss their work meaningfully.

The school has recently taken a few appropriate steps to refine its approach to supporting the progressive development of pupils' skills. This has focused mainly on improving pupils' reading, writing and graph skills. However, this provision is not strategically planned or coordinated effectively enough. As a result, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply or develop their skills, in particular their literacy and numeracy skills, across the curriculum.

When given the opportunity, a minority of pupils speak confidently, using a broad range of vocabulary and justify their views and opinions appropriately. However, too often pupils offer only brief and underdeveloped spoken responses and use only a limited range of vocabulary. This is mainly because teachers do not support or challenge them well enough to improve their responses.

The school has recently aimed to develop a positive culture of reading which has helped to increase opportunities for pupils to engage with basic reading texts. The majority of pupils use basic reading skills to extract information from simple texts. However, in general, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop or apply their advanced reading skills to support their learning.

When given the opportunity, a minority of pupils produce suitably structured short pieces of writing, using an appropriate range of vocabulary to engage their audience. However, pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to write at length across the curriculum and therefore do not develop their writing well enough. Too often, teachers do not ensure that pupils improve the accuracy of their written work. As a result, the majority of pupils make frequent basic errors and do not take sufficient responsibility for checking their work.

The majority of pupils have sound basic number skills and use the four rules competently, for example to convert between percentages and decimals and when calculating using ratios. Many construct a range of graphs accurately. Overall, pupils do not develop their understanding of mathematics and numeracy concepts well enough and do not have sufficient opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

In a few subjects, pupils have meaningful opportunities to develop their digital skills. They use their digital skills suitably, for example when presenting data to explore geographical themes.

The school is beginning to strengthen the promotion of Welsh language and culture, including through activities such as celebrating 'Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae', 'Dydd Miwsig Cymru' and the annual school Eisteddfod. Pupils in Year 7 benefit from a Welsh speaking form teacher and there is helpful support for staff with Welsh terminology.

The majority of pupils understand basic questions well and participate positively in language activities. Around half pronounce words correctly. A few pupils are developing their vocabulary to be able to hold short conversations in Welsh. However, in general pupils lack confidence to communicate effectively or respond spontaneously. They rely heavily on teacher-provided structures, vocabulary lists, and sentence builders. Only around half of pupils achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh.

Overall, the school does not have a clear enough approach to its curriculum. As a result, planning for the progression of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills is too variable. A few staff have beneficial opportunities to collaborate across areas of learning and experience or with primary colleagues to consider their approach to curriculum design. However, this has not led to secure improvements in the school's provision.

Younger pupils engage with a suitable range of subjects and have appropriate support to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyle choices. The health and well-being curriculum is carefully planned to respond to pupil needs. This provides pupils with suitable opportunities to explore themes such as identity and diversity and aligns with the school values of 'Ambition, Respect and Kindness'. This provision is supported by assemblies and tutorial programmes. The school has suitable arrangement to support pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. However, a minority of pupils in Year 10 do not receive appropriate provision for their personal and social education.

Curriculum provision for older pupils is too variable. The school's sixth form offers a wide range of subjects and pupils often study their first choice of courses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a broad range of GCSE options. However, the option to study vocational qualifications is limited. Some pupils study for qualifications that do not always meet their needs or interests well enough.

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

Staff in Llantwit Major School care for their pupils and have developed a supportive community where pupils speak positively about the help and guidance they receive. Many pupils, including sixth form pupils, know who to approach for help and value this support. However, a few pupils say that they find it difficult to access support for their well-being.

Across the school, staff promote the vision for pupils to be 'Ambitious, Respectful and Kind' by rewarding positive behaviours appropriately. Leaders regularly 'patrol' corridors and places where pupils congregate during lesson time. However, too frequently, staff do not follow processes for managing pupils' behaviour well enough. As a result, pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons frequently disrupts learning. There has been a reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions compared to previous years. However, fixed term and permanent exclusions remain too high.

The school celebrates diversity and equality suitably through an appropriately planned programme for younger pupils, including themes such as cultural identity and respectful relationships. In addition, the diversity council create a varied programme of celebrations across the school.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils, including sports, Quiet Club and Karaoke Club. There are a number of interesting trips for pupils including ice skating and academic visits to universities. These are valued by pupils and parents alike.

Pupils benefit from suitable options and transition processes. Impartial advice enables pupils to make informed decisions about future learning or employment. Transition arrangements for pupils with ALN support their individual needs and help them to adjust as they progress through school. Leaders have recently worked closely with the local authority and external agencies to seek alternative learning pathways for some older pupils. Currently, there are a large number of pupils that access these long-term external provisions. Whilst informal discussions involve parents and carers there is not a formal process to accurately record written agreement for their child to access such provision.

There are varied opportunities across the school for pupils to develop their leadership skills and contribute positively to the life of the school. This includes the School Council, the Diversity Council and the Health & Wellbeing Leader role, as well as a bespoke Sixth Form Leadership Programme. These groups enable pupils to lead positive change in the school, for example access to gender neutral toilets and the 'Grab and Go' queue in the school canteen.

The ALN team demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting its pupils. Pupils with ALN have relevant Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which are reviewed appropriately in collaboration with parents and pupils. The ALN team actively encourages its pupils to engage in all aspects of school life, including participating in clubs and the school council. This helps these pupils to develop their personal, social and communication skills.

The school is committed to improving pupils' attendance and has recently strengthened its focus on this aspect of its work. It promotes the importance of good attendance appropriately and is beginning to develop a whole school culture around attendance.

Leaders have reviewed the strategies for monitoring and analysing attendance, making useful and reflective changes, including those to address persistent absenteeism. This has helped to secure some recent improvements. However, rates of persistent absenteeism remain well above those of similar schools.

The school's work on attendance led to an improvement in whole-school attendance last year. However, the rates of attendance remain notably below those of similar schools. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is a cause for concern.

Leaders and staff across the school demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding. Staff make referrals when necessary and work appropriately with a range of external agencies to support pupils and their families. In general, staff respond appropriately to any alleged incidents of bullying. However, a few pupils feel their concerns, particularly around verbal bullying, are not always addressed.

### **Leading and improving**

Over the past five years, the school has experienced significant changes in leadership, resulting in a period of instability. Since her appointment in 2023, the headteacher has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting the development and achievement of all pupils. She has shared her vision based on the school's 'ARK' values of 'Ambition, Respect, Kindness' and this is beginning to be understood by governors, staff and pupils.

The headteacher has recently restructured the leadership team to better align roles and responsibilities with the school's strategic priorities. However, it is not always clear who leads on specific aspects of the school's work. In addition, constant changes of staff have made it difficult to implement initiatives that are required to improve the school. This has hindered sustained improvements in pupils' learning and behaviour.

Senior leaders offer middle leaders suitable levels of support, but they do not hold them to account robustly enough. As a result, they do not help middle leaders to evaluate their provision precisely and accurately so that they can plan for and secure improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Leaders have recently refined their processes for evaluation and improvement. There is a clear calendar of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities, and leaders at all levels now participate in these. However, most leaders do not consider the impact provision has on pupils' learning. They are over-reliant on compliance with school policies, pupil voice findings and Year 11 performance data and do not consider closely enough the progress pupils make in books and lessons. As a result, they do not identify the specific aspects of teaching or provision for skills that have the greatest impact on pupil progress well enough. This means their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are overly positive.

Improvement planning is suitably focused on the school's and national priorities. Despite this, leaders have not secured enough improvements in important aspects of the school's work, including curriculum, the development of pupils' skills, teaching and attendance. In addition, the school has not addressed many of the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Leaders have recently taken some appropriate actions to strengthen the school's approach to professional learning. Staff appreciate the wide range of broadly relevant opportunities that are available to them. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work.

Governors are committed and offer the school valuable support. Although they question senior leaders regarding a few areas of the school's work, such as rates of attendance, they do not consistently challenge senior leaders about other important aspects, including the quality of teaching and its impact on learning.

The headteacher, business manager and governors monitor the school budget regularly. However, leaders do not always take a strategic enough approach to planning their finances. As a result, the school currently has a growing deficit budget and there is not currently an agreed recovery plan. The impact of how the pupil development grant is deployed is not evaluated thoroughly enough to identify effective strategies and plan for further improvements. The school provides suitable support to ensure that pupils who are affected by poverty can engage fully with the extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school, including musical instrument lessons and local and international trips. However, over the last three years the Key Stage 4 performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals was well below that of their counterparts in similar schools.

Over time, the school has built sound relationships with the local community and a good understanding of its needs. The headteacher has worked to strengthen communication and engagement with parents and carers through, for example, weekly 'Major News' bulletins.

### **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

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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