Estyn

Report summary for parents and carers on Hawarden High School

Date of inspection: 09/03/2026

Summary

Hawarden High School is an inclusive and welcoming community where leaders and staff place a strong emphasis on pupils' well-being, aspiration and developing a sense of belonging. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued. The school works carefully to support pupils with a wide range of needs, including those attending the specialist resource bases for dyslexia and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). Staff know pupils well and provide worthwhile tailored support that helps many pupils make sound progress and develop confidence in their learning.

The central student support hub enables pastoral teams to work effectively together to support pupils' emotional and welfare needs. Pupils benefit from valuable leadership opportunities through groups such as the Senedd, which contributes positively to school life. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to improve attendance. While attendance has improved gradually in recent years, it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Leaders and teachers provide pupils with a broad range of learning experiences through a purposeful curriculum that reflects both local and national contexts. In many lessons, pupils make at least expected progress. In these lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and appropriate challenge that help pupils deepen their understanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers adapt their teaching skilfully and use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking. Across the curriculum, many pupils develop appropriate literacy, numeracy and wider skills. However, in a minority of lessons, teaching does not always engage pupils well enough, and tasks do not challenge them sufficiently. In these lessons, pupils make only limited progress. Provision for Welsh within the curriculum is underdeveloped and many pupils lack confidence when speaking Welsh.

The headteacher provides thoughtful leadership and is supported well by a committed team of senior leaders and governors who share a clear vision for the school. Leaders use a range of first-hand evidence to inform self-evaluation and improvement planning and address underperformance robustly. However, in a few cases, self-evaluation does not focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The school has developed strong approaches to tackling the impact of poverty and reducing barriers to learning for pupils from low-income households.

Recommendations and next steps

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

R1 Improve the shortcomings in teaching identified in the report

R2 Refine the precision of self-evaluation and improvement planning

R3 Improve attendance

R4 Strengthen the provision for Welsh

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Full Report

If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the full report

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