

A report on

Westbourne School

**4 Hickman Road
Penarth
CF64 2AJ**

Date of inspection: May 2026

by

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

About Westbourne School

Name of provider	Westbourne School
Proprietor status	Private Limited Company
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	256
Pupils of statutory school age	180
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	12/03/2018
Start date of inspection	12/05/2026

School context:

Westbourne School is a co-educational, independent school for pupils from 3 to 18 years of age. Located in Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan, the school is part of an international group of schools with campuses in Sydney and Singapore.

The school is organised into two sections: the prep school, for pupils from nursery through to Year 5, and the senior school for pupils from Year 6 to Year 13. There are currently 256 pupils on roll. There are 107 pupils in the prep school and 149 in the senior school. There are 42 pupils boarding at the school.

Most pupils live in the Vale of Glamorgan or Cardiff, complemented by a British and International boarding community. The school currently has 23 nationalities within its community. Almost all day pupils have English as their first language with a very few pupils receiving support in learning English as an additional language.

Pupils may join the school at any stage. Prior to entry, prospective pupils are assessed on their non-verbal reasoning, English and mathematics ability.

The principal was appointed in September 2025 and the school was last inspected in 2018. The head of the preparatory school began their role in September 2017.

At the time of the inspection Year 11 and 13 pupils were on study leave and taking public examinations and no Year 12 lessons were observed as, with the exception of 4 pupils the whole year group were on a residential school trip.

Summary

Westbourne School fosters a caring and inclusive environment where pupils feel valued, supported and proud to belong to a diverse community. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes towards learning and interact with one another with maturity, respect and compassion. They engage enthusiastically in lessons, contribute confidently to discussions and show resilience when faced with challenges. Older pupils willingly seek guidance to deepen their understanding, while younger pupils collaborate effectively and persevere with problem-solving activities. These strong attitudes towards learning contribute significantly to the purposeful atmosphere seen across the school.

The school offers pupils a wide range of learning experiences, particularly within the prep school, where the curriculum is broad and enhanced effectively through extracurricular activities and enrichment opportunities. However, curriculum choices within the senior school reduce opportunities for pupils to experience the full breadth of learning in subjects such as the expressive arts. Pupils benefit from experiences that help them develop leadership skills, social awareness and an understanding of their role within both local and global communities. Opportunities such as charitable work, community engagement and pupil leadership roles strengthen pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility. In the sixth form, pupils achieve well through the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme and progress successfully to higher education pathways.

Pupils across the school make strong progress in developing their communication and numeracy skills. Younger pupils produce imaginative and purposeful written work, while older pupils express their ideas clearly and thoughtfully in a range of contexts. Speaking and listening skills are especially well developed, with pupils communicating confidently and respectfully with adults and peers. Numeracy skills are applied successfully across different subject areas, enabling pupils to interpret information, solve problems and make accurate calculations confidently.

Teaching is underpinned by positive working relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers know pupils well. In the strongest practice, teachers provide useful feedback and adapt questioning skilfully to extend pupils' thinking and understanding. However, the quality of feedback and curriculum planning is not consistent across all areas of the school, and opportunities to deepen pupils' higher-order thinking are sometimes missed.

Since taking up post, the principal has established a strong culture focused on inclusion, ambition and pupil well-being. Leaders and staff work collaboratively and communicate high expectations clearly across the school community. Processes for monitoring teaching

and supporting professional learning are developing appropriately. Leaders recognise that aspects of the school's work require further strengthening to ensure greater consistency and accountability.

At the time of the core inspection the school did not meet all of the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Main evaluation

Future ready pupils with a local and global perspective

Westbourne School is a highly welcoming school with its pupil body proud to be members of a diverse and internationally minded educational community. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour, showing kindness and empathy towards each other. For example, when Year 1 pupils share what makes them feel worried and how they deal with that emotion. Pupils show respect for the diverse cultures and backgrounds that make up the school community and engage highly positively in celebrating each other's successes through weekly assemblies.

Nearly all pupils show exceptionally positive attitudes to learning, often keen to share their views in class discussions or answer questions posed by the teacher. For example, when considering the advice they would give to a 'lonely Yeti' in Year 1 or what questions they would ask a person who has turned 100 years old in Year 3 philosophy. Pupils in the senior school display resilience in their learning and are comfortable and willing to ask for support and clarification. For example, in Year 6 pupils support each other and show perseverance when coding to make traffic lights turn on and off in the accurate sequence. Pupils in Year 10 GCSE music are proactive in asking for additional explanation and demonstration related to more challenging forms of notation and rhythm. Pupils' ability to be independent learners and their positive attitudes to learning are a strength of the school.

The curriculum within the prep school is broad, balanced and enriched by extensive extracurricular opportunities. However, a narrowing of the curriculum within the senior school limits breadth of knowledge and learning experiences for pupils, for example, in the expressive arts. Pupils within the sixth form complete the International Baccalaureate (IB) and achieve strong outcomes with nearly all progressing to competitive university courses.

The sixth form curriculum has recently expanded to include a range of A-Level options as an alternative pathway.

Pupils benefit from a personal, social, health (PSHE) programme that promotes pupils' understanding of topics such as; how to stay safe and democracy. The embedding of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child across the school is in development. Across the school, pupils are supported to develop their spiritual and moral understanding through philosophy lessons. For example, pupils in Year 7 consider 'what are moral questions?' and 'what are the consequences of the moral choices we make?'

Across the school, pupils develop their reading, writing and oracy skills very well from their individual starting points. Pupils in Year 2 complete extended pieces of writing for differing purposes. For example, when producing a 'guide to finding a dragon' or Year 3 pupils writing letters to Sir David Attenborough. In Year 8 pupils writing is broadly accurate, for example, when responding to 'How William Golding presents leadership in Lord of the Flies'. In the senior school, pupils confidently demonstrate their speaking and listening skills. They regularly make perceptive, accurate and reflective contributions to a range of class discussions. For example, Year 8 pupils explain the post-World War I peace settlement from unique national perspectives and read with confidence when understanding 'Who was Edward Colston and why was his statue toppled'. Oracy is a notable strength across the school, with nearly all pupils speaking confidently with adults and peers.

Nearly all pupils develop secure numeracy skills. For example, reception pupils identify shapes confidently and follow colour patterns successfully. Year 3 pupils use whiteboards and clock faces to show their understanding of digital and analogue time. Nearly all pupils in GCSE classes demonstrate a high standard of written mathematics, using formulae and layout to clearly communicate techniques and strategies. In the senior school, numeracy skills are embedded within the curriculum. For example, most year 7 pupils accurately complete climate graphs to enable them to compare the climate in Vostok and London. In addition, most pupils in Year 9 use standard form accurately in chemistry to calculate the number of atoms in moles of a solid or gas.

Teaching

Across the school, teachers rapidly develop highly positive working relationships with their pupils and know them extremely well. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and ready to learn. Teachers share and use this knowledge highly effectively, for example, to ensure seamless transition between sections of the school. The consistency of pupil and parent

experience between nursery and reception classes is a notable strength. As a result, pupils throughout the school settle quickly into the rhythms and routines of each year group, and teachers have a clear understanding of each pupils' potential and context.

A majority of teachers use questioning effectively to assess pupils' understanding and to provide verbal feedback which drives progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers' accept short, summative responses from pupils. As a result, in these lessons, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop higher order thinking skills. Where teaching is most effective, pupils receive detailed, written feedback which provides clear, actionable next steps. As a result, pupils know how to improve and make rapid progress. However, the quality and frequency of formal feedback is inconsistent and, as a result, opportunities for pupils to improve their work are missed.

Across the school, curriculum planning is not always aligned to the full range of needs exhibited by pupils. There is wide variation in the detail provided in subject plans. Where curriculum planning is most effective the needs and aptitudes of pupils are fully considered. However, where curriculum planning is less effective the range and type of tasks undertaken by pupils does not always appropriately challenge or extend their knowledge or support their progress.

Within the prep school, teachers have a clear understanding of pupil progress informed by thorough baseline assessments which are regularly reviewed. As a result, they provide swift interventions to support pupils' learning where necessary. Planned tracking assessments are used effectively in the senior school each half-term to measure academic attainment, provide summative feedback and set targets.

Enrichment

Pupils across the school benefit from a wide range of opportunities to take on leadership roles. Prep school pupils have the opportunity to participate in the school council or be prefects whilst senior school pupils act as supportive mentors for younger pupils and those new to the school. Volunteering as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the creativity, action and service element of the IB programme provide pupils with a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills effectively. Each year group in the senior school has pupil leaders representing them on school council which meets half termly to discuss agenda items related to school improvement. Pupil leaders are elected by their peers and reflect positively about the fairness and transparency of the process. These authentic leadership opportunities support pupils in developing the skills to become future leaders.

Pupils within the prep school make a positive contribution to the wider community through ‘community action mornings’. For example, litter picking activities at the local beach or visiting an old people’s home. Additionally, senior school pupils within the choir sang at the Christmas light switch on and members of the sixth form climbed Pen Y Fan to raise money for charity. As a result, pupils understanding of their place in the wider community and local and global societies is strengthened.

In addition, many parents value the positive ethos of the school and support the ‘Westbourne Values’ that the school promotes. In particular, they value the opportunity to participate in the life of the school and further understand the learning experiences of their children. For example, when accompanying pupils in the prep school to their outdoor learning sessions or when attending Friday celebration assemblies.

Refocused Leadership, culture and ambition

In the short time since their appointment, the principal has worked tirelessly, in collaboration with the wider leadership team, to establish a robust, school-wide culture of inclusivity, care and ambition. As a result, staff throughout the school share in a common purpose, and work together effectively to further pupils’ attainment and well-being.

In support of this, leaders have clarified staff roles and responsibilities, providing job descriptions and relevant professional learning. For example, the role of the form tutor has been enhanced and formalised to ensure consistency, with targeted INSET to develop practice. As a result, there has been a notable strengthening in parental and pupil confidence in the school’s provision for well-being.

Senior and middle leaders are a highly collaborative, energetic and ambitious group. They are highly effective in communicating and modelling high expectations of behaviour, ambition and care. As a result, all areas of the school are calm, purposeful learning environments characterised by high levels of support and respect. The principal is a highly visible presence around the school, making their time and attention available to all members of the school community, prioritising communication with parents, and engaging purposefully with all areas of school life. As a result, nearly all members of the school community feel their opinions are increasingly heard, valued and acted on where appropriate.

Senior and middle leaders have established a well-structured programme of quality assurance activities through which they collect first-hand evidence of teaching at the school. They use their findings to inform the school’s professional learning offer, with a

particular focus on sharing best practice. However, leaders recognise the need to sharpen the focus of their quality assurance processes on the impact of teaching on pupil progress.

Staff across the school complete regular safeguarding training and there is a well understood system for reporting safeguarding concerns relating to pupils or staff. The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive relevant safeguarding training. However, policies and practice relating to broader aspects of safeguarding practice and health and safety are not robust enough and as a result the school did not meet all of the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. During the inspection, the school began to address these issues.

The proprietor has established a clear vision for the school, centred on developing the global perspectives of pupils, and preparing them to become STEM and business leaders of the future. They play an active role in the pursuit of these aims, bringing a wide range of beneficial expertise and perspectives from the commercial world. The proprietor monitors the school's commercial and strategic operations closely and provides effective oversight of financial matters. However, oversight of the quality of education and matters of policy and practice related to compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2024 is underdeveloped.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 the school should:

- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with
- Ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The suitability of proprietors and staff

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The provision of information

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Fully comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- R2 Increase opportunities to ensure pupils to receive experiences in all areas of learning consistently.
- R3 Ensure teacher planning and delivery provides appropriate challenge to all pupils consistently
- R4 Increase consistency in the quality of feedback to ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Government will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step. Welsh Government may then request Estyn to support the school through an improvement process.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders 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
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- 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 had 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 (where appropriate), 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 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework

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:

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