



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on
St David's High School
St David's Terrace
Saltney
Chester
CH4 0AE

Date of inspection: April 2011

by

Mr Peter Harris

Under Contract for

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

St David's High School is an English-medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 618 students and pupils, including 72 in the sixth form compared with 631 pupils and students when the school was last inspected.

Nearly 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM) compared with the Welsh average of about 15% for secondary schools. The school is situated in the town of Saltney very close to the Flintshire/Cheshire border. Approximately 12% of learners live in England. No learners come from Welsh-speaking homes. A very small minority of learners currently learn English as an additional language.

The school's intake of pupils represents the full range of ability. Just over one percent of pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). This figure is slightly below the average for Wales as a whole.

The headteacher took up his post in 2003. Since the last inspection the senior leadership team (SLT) has been re-structured. It is now comprised of a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and three senior teachers.

The school aims to provide each learner with an education of high quality so that each one maximises his or her potential.

The school works in close partnership with five other secondary schools and the local further education college to enhance provision at key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for St David's High School is £3732 which compares with a maximum of £4429 and a minimum of £3557 for secondary schools in Flintshire. The school has the 5th lowest budget per pupil out of the 12 secondary schools in Flintshire.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

St David's High School is a good school because it has been successful in raising the standards of pupils' and students' achievement and wellbeing. The major factors which have contributed to this are the:

- quality of leadership and management;
- improvement in the quality of teaching;
- use of data to set and monitor targets; and
- support and guidance offered to learners.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because of the:

- outstanding strategic leadership provided by the headteacher;
- highly effective leadership and support provided by senior and middle management;
- culture of high expectations; and
- successful track record over the last three years that has seen significant improvements in learners' levels of attainment.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the staff and governors of St David's High School need to:

R1: continue to improve further the standards and wellbeing of learners;

R2: work with the local authority to improve facilities in design technology;

R3: strengthen Welsh language development and the Welsh dimension of the curriculum; and,

R4: continue to improve levels of attendance.

These recommendations feature in the school's current development plan.

What happens next?

St David's High School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

In key stage 3, results are above national averages in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator (CSI) (1). When compared to its family of schools (2), these results are broadly in line with the average. When compared with similar schools in terms of FSM benchmarks, results in English, mathematics and the CSI are above average; those in science are slightly below average.

In key stage 4, performance on nearly all indicators has improved over the last three years. It is above the national average and that of its family of schools. In 2010, the percentage of pupils attaining the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics improved by six percentage points from 2009. No pupil left school without a qualification. As in key stage 3, pupils make very good progress over this key stage. In 2010, their performance on nearly every indicator was above average when compared with similar schools in terms of the FSM benchmarks.

In both key stages, pupils' performance is significantly above expectations.

(1) The core subject indicator refers to the percentage of pupils who gain the expected level in Welsh or English, mathematics and science combined.

(2) Families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and having special education

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In the sixth form, learners' attainment at the level 3 threshold is just above the national average. This represents a good level of achievement for these students.

In all key stages, while girls generally attain higher standards than boys, the gap in relative performance is smaller than average.

Throughout the school, learners make good progress during lessons. The vast majority of pupils remembers previous work and uses this well to learn new skills. In many subjects, learners develop worthwhile thinking skills and apply these effectively to solve problems. Most listen attentively to teachers and each other, and this supports their progress in learning. Many pupils and students read and write well and can express their views clearly. Pupils' use their numeracy skills and information and communications technology (ICT) skills well in many lessons.

Most pupils remain in full-time education at the end of key stage 4. Many students go on to higher education after the sixth form.

Specific groups of pupils, including those entitled to FSM and those with additional learning needs (ALN) make very good progress in line with their abilities.

Pupils are beginning to make acceptable progress in Welsh second language; in 2010, almost half of pupils gained a level 2 qualification. While throughout the school pupils are increasingly aware of its Welsh identity, they do not yet use Welsh independently enough or make enough use of their Welsh-language skills outside Welsh lessons.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners have a secure understanding of how to become healthy. They have positive attitudes to healthy eating. They exercise regularly and most engage readily in a wide range of activities that promotes their physical fitness. Pupils feel safe.

Pupils are motivated to do well and willingly engage in activities within the classroom and the local community. Participation in out of school activities, particularly in the performing arts, is exemplary.

Attendance rates over the last three years fall below national averages. Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school.

Through the school council and other groups, pupils contribute effectively to many aspects of school life. Pupils have been influential in introducing a new uniform and in developing the school's physical environment. They are represented on the school's governing body as associate members.

By various means such as regular questionnaires, pupils and students give their views on a wide range of issues including the conditions under which they learn best.

Learners readily take on responsibilities and older pupils are well prepared for life and work outside school. Pupils and students relate well to each other and have well-developed social skills.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the needs of learners and the local community. It complies fully with all statutory requirements.

A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including outstanding provision for the performing arts, considerably enhances the opportunities available to learners.

In both key stages the curriculum builds systematically on previous work. In key stage 4 and in the sixth form, consortium working allows learners to be offered a very broad range of options that meet fully the requirements of learning pathways (LP) 14-19. The planning for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) in key stage 4 has been particularly effective.

The development of learners' communication, number, ICT and thinking skills is well planned across the school. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is well promoted.

The Welsh dimension of the curriculum and Welsh ethos of the school are adequate and good progress is being made in developing the Welsh language at the school.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers plan well structured lessons. Teachers apply their understanding of the features of high quality teaching and learning effectively; they use a wide range of activities which ensures that pupils make good progress. Very good staff pupil relationships foster positive attitudes to learning. Good support, guidance and questioning maintain learners' concentration and effort.

Where teaching is excellent, expectations are demanding and promote a high proportion of active, enquiry-based learning and pupil collaboration. New technologies extend and consolidate learning. In a small minority of cases lessons are insufficiently planned, lack challenge, and teacher talk dominates.

Marking is generally regular and helpful. Many teachers provide detailed feedback on progress and advice on improvement.

Pupil attainment data is used very effectively in the assessment of learning. Pupils know the standards they are aiming for and what they need to do to achieve success. Progress is tracked meticulously, and underperformance addressed rigorously.

Reports to parents contain much useful information, and consultation meetings provide good opportunities for follow up discussion. However, the reporting of individual progress and targets for improvement are insufficiently robust in key stage 3.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The ways in which the school supports learners to raise achievement are highly effective.

The high quality of pastoral care, enhanced by external specialist services, helps to establish and maintain a supportive learning environment.

A well co-ordinated Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme guides learners towards making confident and well-informed choices. There are well-managed procedures for induction.

Various activities promote learners personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective use is made of contemporary issues to enhance this provision.

There are a range of activities that successfully promote learners' health, wellbeing, and fitness.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The school makes good provision to meet the needs of learners with ALN. They receive good support in mainstream classes and within small groups.

Individual education plans (IEP) and individual behaviour plans (IBP) are clear and specific. Support staff make a valuable contribution towards helping the learners achieve their targets, using a range of appropriate resources. Parents and carers are kept well informed of progress.

There is good provision for more able and talented pupils.

Learning environment: Excellent

The school has been very successful in establishing a culture of high expectations which makes a substantial contribution to the above average progress made by learners.

The inclusive nature of the school makes a significant contribution to pupil progress. The school promotes integration, equal opportunities, positive relationships and mutual respect extremely well. The ways in which the school has established a safe, supportive learning community through the consistent application of the Equal Opportunities Policy are exceptional.

School accommodation is sufficient and learners have access to good resources. However, provision in parts of design and technology is dated and inadequate. Displays in corridors and classrooms support learning and celebrate achievement.

Buildings and grounds are well-maintained and arrangements for security are good.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Excellent

The headteacher communicates his vision for the school successfully and provides excellent strategic leadership. The deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the SLT are exceptionally effective in communicating high expectations for securing improvement and challenging staff and pupils positively to achieve good outcomes.

The school uses data particularly well to monitor learners' performance and to set challenging targets. This process has been highly effective in raising standards of achievement. Curriculum managers use this data to assure outcomes that are well above expectations. Learning managers support pupils very well. The ways in which the school monitors learners' progress and motivates them to succeed are outstanding.

Structured performance management arrangements identify suitable professional development opportunities for all staff.

Governors are supportive, well-informed about the work and performance of the school, and are actively involved in setting the strategic direction. Beneficial links have been established between individual governors and departments and there is a system of termly reviews by heads of faculty who report to governing body meetings. Governors monitor the school's finances thoroughly.

The school takes full account of national and local priorities that feature prominently in policies and improvement plans, including LP 14-19 and the School Effectiveness Framework.

Improving quality: Good

The headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the school is performing. School self-evaluation is based on a good range of first hand evidence to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. The school makes good use of reviews by local authority advisers to provide further, independent corroboration of the quality of teaching and learning.

Middle leaders play a central role in determining the effectiveness of their areas. Their annual review of performance, that includes a careful analysis of examination results, plays an important role in the school's continuing improvement.

Self-evaluation is successful in identifying important areas for development that are having a positive impact on learners' performance.

The school uses the results of monitoring and performance management to diagnose staff training requirements. It uses its training budget in a flexible way so that a wide range of needs can be met. Many middle and senior leaders have attained further professional qualifications.

There is a beneficial culture of collaboration between teachers and a professional learning community is beginning to develop.

Partnership working: Good

The school works successfully and strategically with a wide range of partners to enhance the quality of education for learners.

It makes a substantial contribution within the Deeside Consortium to plan and extend the curriculum on offer in partnership with neighbouring schools and colleges. Decisions on provision and resources are informed by the outcomes of rigorous, collective quality assurance. High levels of trust, communication and collaborative strategic planning are demonstrated. This is a significant feature.

The local business, industrial and higher education communities work effectively with the school on numerous programmes to raise pupils' aspirations and impact positively on pupil career pathways. Links with professional sporting organisations are also utilised skilfully to support reading and wider social and commercial awareness.

There are well established and highly effective links with a range of health and social care agencies, and the local authority advisory service.

The school works closely with its partner primary schools to secure very successful pupil transfer and curriculum continuity.

Parents are kept well informed on all issues, with high numbers attending consultation meetings and actively supporting school activities.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources well. Comprehensive procedures ensure that resources are allocated to meet identified priorities. Leaders and managers ensure that improvement plans are costed and monitored carefully to keep spending in line with the school's financial planning. School improvement planning is focused strongly on improving outcomes for learners.

There are enough suitably qualified teaching staff who are deployed efficiently. Teaching assistants and non-teaching staff are deployed effectively to support learning. Appropriate arrangements ensure the school meets statutory requirements relating to the national agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload'.

Well-established partnerships increase the range of courses and qualifications in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. They contribute to significant improvement in standards and provision in many areas of the school's work.

The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

One hundred and thirty-three parent questionnaires were completed, representing a good proportion of the total number of parents. They expressed positive views about the school. Nearly all say that the school expects their children to work hard and to do their best. Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and say their children like being there. Most feel that their children are safe at school and that their children are making good progress, the teaching is good and that their children are well prepared for moving onto college or work. Most say that the school is well run and find it approachable if they have any questions or concerns. Most feel they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by around 30% of the pupils, who were selected at random. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. Most feel they are doing well in school, that there are enough resources to enable them to learn well and they have many opportunities to get regular exercise. They say that teaching is good, and that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to take on responsibility. Most feel the school helps them to be ready for the next stage of education, training or work. Many feel that the school deals well with bullying and that they have someone to talk to if they are worried. Many also say that they are treated with respect, and that they are helped to understand and respect people from different backgrounds. A majority of pupils feels that the school listens to their views and think behaviour is good.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mr Peter Harris	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Herdman	Team Inspector
Mr Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Mr David Hughes	Team Inspector
Mr Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Ms Sue Rivers	Peer Inspector
Mr Chris Usher	School Nominee

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Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11