



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Chepstow School  
Welsh Street  
Chepstow  
Monmouthshire  
NP16 5LR**

**Date of inspection: September 2017**

**by**

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

## About Chepstow School

Chepstow Comprehensive School is an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school and is maintained by Monmouthshire local authority. The number of pupils on roll has fallen slightly since the last inspection to the current 977 including 220 in the sixth form.

The school serves the town of Chepstow and the surrounding area. Just over 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 16.5%. Less than 1% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales and very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. There are around 12% of pupils with a special educational need. This is much lower than the national average of 22.7%. Around 3% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is close to the national average of 2.8%.

The headteacher took up her post in January 2012 and the senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher, four assistant headteachers and the business manager.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

Chepstow School has a supportive and inclusive ethos where many pupils feel secure and valued. At the end of key stage 4, pupils achieve well in English and mathematics. Many pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning and make suitable progress. However, a minority of pupils do not always engage well with their work and are too easily distracted. The school's curriculum builds well on pupils' previous learning, although the school does not have a co-ordinated approach to the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum. The headteacher's vision, which is shared by most leaders, is that all pupils reach their full potential. Leadership has been successful in securing improved outcomes in performance indicators that include English and mathematics but have had insufficient impact on improving pupil behaviour and the quality of teaching.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve the progress that all pupils make in lessons including the development of their literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Improve pupil behaviour
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching so that it encourages pupils' enjoyment in learning
- R4 Improve the quality, distribution and impact of leadership at all levels

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, most notably English and mathematics.

In many lessons at key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils recall prior learning well and make suitable progress.

Most pupils listen to the teacher and their peers with attention and respect. The very few who do not listen well enough often miss useful information and important instructions. The majority of pupils express themselves clearly and make appropriate use of subject specific vocabulary. A very few build skilfully on the contributions of others. This includes during class discussions on literary texts such as 'The Diary of Anne Frank' where the main focus is upon determining the characteristics and emotions of individuals referred to. They make impressive contributions to sophisticated and challenging discussions on topics such as the necessity or otherwise of man's belief in creation. A minority of pupils provide brief, underdeveloped verbal responses, though occasionally this is due to limited opportunities to do otherwise.

Many pupils use a suitable range of reading strategies to support their learning. Most pupils skim and scan suitably to locate information. Only a minority make good use of inference and deduction, and particularly synthesis, to enhance their learning in different subjects.

Many pupils produce writing that is technically sound and structured appropriately. This includes producing detailed and precise plans to explain a parachute experiment. A few of the more able pupils craft more assured pieces ranging from letters of application to engaging discussions on war poetry. There is a minority of pupils whose writing lacks sufficient control and structure. They continue to make too many basic errors in their writing and do not take enough responsibility for improving the content and accuracy of that writing before they hand it to the teacher.

Many pupils possess suitable numeracy skills. This includes applying mental arithmetic in normal life situations and extracting information from basic bar graphs. In addition, though most pupils have secure measurement skills, for example measuring the height of bounce using a metre rule, they do not always understand fully the purpose of that measurement or take sufficient care to eliminate error, for example that due to the vertical alignment of the metre rule. Overall, few make worthwhile use of those skills often or well enough in subjects other than mathematics. Pupils make very little use of, or develop, their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well enough in different subjects.

Performance in the level 2 threshold, including English and mathematics, and in the capped points score dipped in 2016 but had been much better in each of the two previous years and better than in many similar schools.

In 2016, the performance of boys and of girls fell in all indicators and in the majority of those indicators did not compare favourably with that of boys and girls respectively in similar schools. In previous years, the performance of boys has generally been below that of boys in similar schools while girls have performed a little better than their counterparts in similar schools. Unverified data for 2017 suggests that the performance of boys has improved, particularly in those indicators that include English and mathematics, but that of girls has fallen quite significantly in many indicators.

The performance at key stage 4 in 2016 of pupils eligible for free school meals fell in every indicator and was below the average for similar schools, and for schools nationally, in nearly all indicators. Over a three year period, this group of pupils has not performed as well as those in similar schools in the majority of indicators.

Over the period 2014 to 2016, the progress made by more able pupils has been variable though unverified data for 2017 suggests a clear increase in the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSE or equivalent grades at A\*-A. Pupils with additional learning needs generally make better progress than expected.

In each of the last two years, many pupils were entered for a GCSE examination in Welsh. Just over half of the pupils in the year group achieved a C grade or better at GCSE.

Most sixth form pupils demonstrate secure recall and make good progress in their lessons. They work well collaboratively and independently, when, for example, researching topics such as tidal power. The majority demonstrate strong verbal skills when they confidently and articulately discuss topics ranging from the enhanced greenhouse effect to the abolition of slavery.

Over the last three years, performance in the sixth form has been variable. In two of those years it was above that of the average in similar schools in the level 3 threshold, but consistently well below in the average wider points score and in the proportion of pupils achieving three grades at A\*-C. However, most sixth form pupils make more progress than expected.

At the end of Year 11, most pupils remain in full time education either in the school or a further education college.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement**

In many lessons at key stage 3 and key stage 4, many pupils settle quickly and engage suitably with their work. In a few lessons, mostly at key stage 3, pupils demonstrate genuine pleasure in their learning, for example when discussing what we can learn about the character and circumstances of Anne Frank when reading her diary. However, a minority of pupils have limited concentration. They do not always engage well with their work and are too easily distracted. When this occurs, their behaviour impacts negatively upon their learning and that of others. A minority of pupils do not show enough courtesy and consideration for others during morning break and lunch time.

Many pupils generally display positive attitudes to their learning, and develop their confidence as they make progress in their knowledge and understanding.. Many sixth form pupils demonstrate resilience and an enthusiasm for their work. These pupils are well motivated. They demonstrate a well-developed work ethic and have high expectations of themselves. This is clear when they discuss current concerns including the impact of global warming.

Many pupils know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They understand the importance of a sensible diet and taking part in healthy activities. Pupils benefit from their participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available at the school. Participation rates in sporting activities such as taekwondo and kayaking, and in clubs such as the art and friendship, and debating clubs, are high.

Attendance has improved slightly over the last four years and has consistently been higher than that of similar schools. During this period, persistent absence has decreased. However, over the last two years the number of days lost to fixed-term exclusions has increased slightly and is high.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement**

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Nearly all teachers exhibit strong subject knowledge and most are good language role models. In many lessons, teachers establish positive working relationships with pupils. They provide pupils with clear instructions and explain concepts well. In around half of lessons, teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils and they ensure a suitable pace to learning. In many sixth form lessons, teachers nurture skilfully the enthusiasm of pupils and challenge them well. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

In a minority of lessons at key stage 3 and key stage 4, the activities that teachers plan do not enthuse pupils and are not matched well enough to their abilities. In these lessons, too many pupils do not concentrate on their work and disrupt their peers. When this occurs, teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. In many cases, teachers' planning for the progressive development of skills, in lessons other than English and mathematics, is underdeveloped.

In a few instances, teachers pose incisive questions that probe pupils' understanding and challenge them to develop their verbal responses. However, generally, teachers do not question well enough to extend pupils' learning.

The majority of teachers provide beneficial written or verbal feedback to pupils. Around half of teachers identify and address pupils' spelling and grammatical errors helpfully. A few teachers follow the school's assessment and feedback guidance effectively. For example, at key stage 4, pupils studying Welsh benefit from written comments that are diagnostic and let them know what to do to improve. In these cases, teachers also routinely pose helpful questions to which many pupils respond positively. However, in many cases written feedback is too superficial and is not effective in helping pupils to improve their work. Overall, few teachers ensure that pupils respond appropriately to their comments..

The school's curriculum builds suitably on pupils' learning from previous key stages. A few curriculum areas are working with local primary schools to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This is mostly through English and French and includes a focus upon boys' writing. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is a comprehensive range of options, including vocational courses, that meets the needs of pupils well. Pupils, particularly the more able, have access to valuable enrichment experiences that encourage participation in community and enterprise activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise Scheme and The Dragons' Den. In addition, local and overseas trips contribute effectively to pupils' learning experiences.

The school does not have a coherent and co-ordinated approach to the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum. Although there are suitable interventions to support pupils with weak literacy skills, currently, there is no similar provision for those pupils who require support for their numeracy..

Pupils, particularly at key stage 3, do not benefit from sufficient opportunities to develop and practise their Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of Welsh culture.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement**

The school has a supportive and inclusive ethos. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is addressed through suitable assemblies, form tutor time and in various lessons across the curriculum. Many pupils feel secure and valued and there is suitable guidance and support for their wellbeing.

The school encourages pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and makes suitable provision for supporting pupils' healthy eating and drinking. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to take regular physical exercise through the wide variety of popular sporting clubs, which include water polo, taekwondo and kayaking. The school also offers a wide range of valuable opportunities for pupils to participate in other extra-curricular activities, for example the drama club, the school Eisteddfod and the annual musical production. Local and overseas trips contribute effectively to pupils' learning experiences.

The elected school 'Senedd' makes useful contributions to school policies, for example the new school uniform policy. However, the 'Senedd' does not always communicate effectively with other pupils. Pupils have limited opportunities to share their views, including those on what and how they learn.

The school tracks and monitors well the progress of individuals and groups of pupils at all key stages. This information is used suitably to target pupils for helpful support and intervention so that they make better progress, for example in English and mathematics. The school's coaching programme provides strong support for vulnerable pupils. This has a positive impact on the self-esteem, attendance and progress of most pupils who access this provision.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs well. Their progress is tracked against individual education plan (IEP) targets, which include useful strategies to support teaching and learning. The school provides helpful support for pupils with emotional, health and social needs.

The school has effective transition arrangements for pupils joining the school and for those moving into the sixth form. It provides all pupils with useful options advice and a valuable one-to-one interview to discuss future career plans.

Termly interim reports and detailed annual reports provide parents with beneficial information on their child's progress and effort, and include meaningful subject-related targets for improvement. The school is beginning to communicate well with parents through newsletters and the recently established parent focus group.

The school has recently strengthened procedures to promote good behaviour. However, teachers do not follow these procedures consistently. As a result, there has been insufficient impact on the behaviour of pupils.

Provision for raising the awareness of equality and diversity is a strength. The school recognises pupils' individuality and actively promotes inclusivity amongst its pupils. An example of this is the respect week, which culminated in a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender march.

The school has appropriate procedures to address any cases of bullying. Pupil forums such as the Invisible Army are effective, where older pupils 'buddy up' with younger vulnerable pupils to improve their wellbeing.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, based on the idea of an inclusive community in which all pupils reach their full potential. This vision is shared by most senior and middle leaders at the school.

Leadership at the school has been successful in securing improved outcomes against the key performance indicators at key stage 4 that include English and mathematics. However, leaders at the school have had insufficient impact on improving pupil behaviour at the school, or on the quality of teaching that pupils receive.

Roles and responsibilities at senior leadership level cover the key aspects of school leadership and management. However, the balance and range of responsibilities are not equitable across the team as a whole. This limits the impact of the senior leadership team as a whole and particularly those who have significantly more responsibility. Minutes of senior leadership meetings show a consistent focus on pupil achievement and progress, and include appropriate action points.

The quality and effectiveness of middle leadership are too inconsistent. Records of action from departmental meetings are of variable quality and, in a few cases, do not exist at all. This has a negative impact on the ability of those departments to address properly issues of pupil performance and progress. Senior leaders oversee the work of middle leaders and their teams. However, these links are too variable in their effectiveness and do not always support the improvements required.

The governing body fulfils its duty of challenge and support robustly. It monitors the school's progress carefully against its aims and objectives.

The school undertakes a comprehensive programme of self-evaluation activity. This includes regular and relevant opportunities to gather first-hand evidence. However, evaluation of these findings lacks rigour, and quality assurance processes have not made a significant impact on a few key aspects of the school's work. In particular, teaching, assessment and the co-ordination and development of skills remain important areas for improvement.

Senior and middle leaders have a sound understanding of their roles in quality assurance. Overall, the school's self-evaluation processes provide a broadly accurate appraisal of many aspects of its performance. However, the school does not identify its strengths and areas for development well enough, for example when evaluating the quality of teaching and progress against most recommendations from the previous inspection. The school makes suitable use of data to analyse pupil outcomes and trends in performance but it has not been as thorough when considering wellbeing indicators, such as attendance data and information on behaviour. In addition, monitoring activities are not focused sharply enough on standards, teaching or skills development.

The school improvement plan identifies clear and appropriate aims for school improvement, based suitably on improving standards, teaching and leadership. As a result, leaders have brought about improvements in certain key areas. For example, over time, outcomes at key stage 4 have improved in English and been sustained in mathematics. Previous improvement plans are reviewed appropriately, but these reviews are insufficiently evaluative overall.

A comprehensive and relevant series of professional learning opportunities is planned for all staff. These events are helpful in keeping staff abreast of current educational priorities. However, these activities have not led to sufficient improvements in key areas.

Performance management is weak. Broadly suitable objectives are set, but many performance reviews are not thorough or purposeful. This does not lead to the improvements required.

Senior leaders consider expenditure carefully and monitor it regularly against school priorities. The governing body exercises its role well in relation to the school's budget, monitoring financial activity carefully and holding school leaders properly to account.

Leaders at the school have successfully reduced its budget deficit and placed the school on a secure financial footing moving forward. In the context of the age of the building, the budget is used appropriately to resource the learning environment.

Plans for the use of specific grants are appropriate and suitably detailed. However, in the case of the pupil development grant, the school has yet to secure a sustained improvement in outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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