



# Report summary for parents and carers on Pontypridd High School

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

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

# Overview

Pontypridd High School is currently undergoing a period of significant change. The school will close at the end of the academic year 2023-2024 and will amalgamate with a local primary school to become Ysgol Bro Taf, a 3-16 school, from September 2024. The planned date for the transition to the new school was September 2022, but due to various factors beyond the school's control this was delayed. This delay has posed considerable challenges to the school, particularly because leaders have been unable to appoint to permanent posts for three years. This situation is now coming to an end as the transition to the new school takes place. Leaders have navigated the challenges of recent years sensitively and sensibly, ensuring that the school continues to operate efficiently and succeeding in maintaining an ethos of positivity and optimism. The unwavering professionalism of staff at a time of change and uncertainty is striking and reflects their genuine commitment to the pupils and the local community. Leadership at all levels is a particular strength of the school.

The school is a happy and positive community. Pupils feel valued and have many opportunities to influence the provision offered to them. Their involvement in the 'Moondance' project, which uses public health data related to the local community and enables them to influence positive change related to this, is a particularly notable example. Most pupils behave well, feel safe and feel that the school deals effectively with any rare incidents of bullying. However, a very few pupils do not behave well. Despite recent improvements in attendance rates, pupils' attendance remains too low, especially that of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Staff are deeply committed to supporting the well-being and educational attainment of the pupils. Positive working relationships between staff and pupils are a clear strength and there is an extensive range of provision to support pupils' needs. There is a strong culture of care and safeguarding.

The school has a local authority Learning Support Class (LSC) that provides education to pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This provides a nurturing and caring environment that supports them well to integrate successfully into the wider school community.

Many pupils engage readily in their learning and, in many lessons, they make sound progress. In these lessons, teachers plan helpful activities that support pupils' learning well. In a few particularly effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan skilfully to enable them to make strong progress. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations. These teachers do not provide an appropriate level of challenge in their lessons or enough helpful feedback to pupils.

The school provides an appropriate curriculum at Key Stage 4 and is developing a broadly suitable provision for Curriculum for Wales. Pupils' positive attitudes towards the Welsh language and the secure progress the majority make in their Welsh language skills is of particular note. However, in general, pupils are not making sufficient progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and digital skills due to a lack of opportunities. In particular, they do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills, especially their advanced skills, in authentic subject-specific contexts.

The school's comprehensive self-evaluation systems and the integrated approach to school improvement means that leaders know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. Despite considerable strengths in leadership and largely due to circumstances beyond their control, leaders have been unable to have the necessary impact on important aspects of the school's work such as attendance and behaviour, the provision for skills and the quality of teaching and assessment.

# Recommendations

- R1 Improve attendance, especially that of pupils eligible for free school meals, and the behaviour of a very few pupils
- R2 Improve the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills within subject-specific contexts
- R3 Improve pupils' learning and progress by improving teaching and assessment, particularly the level of challenge in lessons and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve

## What happens next

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



## School context

Name of provider	Pontypridd High School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Number of pupils on roll	796
Pupils of statutory school age	757
Number in sixth form	2
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 20.2%)	29.0%
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 17.8%)	5.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	12/01/2015
Start date of inspection	23/10/2023

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