



Report summary for parents and carers on Pontarddulais Comprehensive School

Date of inspection: December 2023

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

Overview

Pontarddulais Comprehensive School is a dynamic and inclusive school where pupils, regardless of background or ability, thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Typically, pupils enjoy school, and they are polite and courteous as they interact with adults and each other. They are confident, respectful and eager to learn. In general, pupils value their school experiences and want to come to school. As a result of this, pupils' attendance, including for those eligible for free school meals, has recovered well since the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and is substantially above that of similar schools.

Leaders, teachers and support staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff know their pupils well and are adept at providing extensive tailored support to meet pupils' academic and well-being needs. There is a well-established culture of safeguarding, and most pupils feel safe and secure in school. The school's specialist teaching facility (STF) provides exceptional learning experiences for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. These pupils make strong progress in essential independent living and communication skills.

Staff foster positive working relationships with most pupils, who in turn engage well in their learning. In many lessons, consistently good teaching enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers plan lessons carefully, linking learning to previous lessons or real-life situations. They use their strong subject knowledge to enthuse pupils to want to know more and give pupils useful feedback on how to improve their work. In the most effective lessons, teachers ask probing questions which promote rich and deep classroom discussions.

Leaders have carefully designed a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum. There is a clear focus on the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills. Leaders provide high quality professional learning to teachers, so that they deliver worthwhile opportunities for pupils to practise and develop these skills in most subject areas. As a result, many pupils use these skills confidently in a variety of contexts. Leaders are implementing their approach to Curriculum for Wales with clarity and purpose and are working well with local primary schools to ensure pupils progress appropriately as they move on to secondary school.

The headteacher's principled and visionary leadership, combined with significant levels of trust and professional learning, ensure that all members of the school community share high aspirations for the school. Leaders at all levels, along with governors, maintain a relentless focus on ensuring the best possible experience for pupils. Leaders use regular and robust self-evaluation activities purposefully, to support their drive for continuous improvement. While senior leaders use the views of pupils to inform their self-evaluation well at a whole-school level, the use of pupil voice in areas of learning is less well-established. Despite this, the school's rigorous and cyclical approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning is a notable strength, particularly how it encourages all staff and governors to play an active role in identifying and working together to achieve the school's improvement priorities.

Recommendations

- R1 Further develop opportunities to gather and use the views of pupils to inform self-evaluation at a subject area level

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare case studies on its work in relation to improving attendance and school improvement processes for dissemination on Estyn's website.



School context

Name of provider	Pontarddulais Comprehensive School
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Number of pupils on roll	852
Pupils of statutory school age	852
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 21.2%)	16.5%
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 14.8%)	20.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.8%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2016
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023

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