



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

**A report on**

**Lewis School Pengam  
Gilfach  
Bargoed  
CF81 8LJ**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

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

## About Lewis School Pengam

Lewis School Pengam is an 11 to 18 community comprehensive school for boys, with a mixed sex sixth form, maintained by Caerphilly County Borough Council. There are 793 pupils on roll with 123 in the sixth form. This is lower than at the time of the last inspection in 2012 when there were 956 pupils on roll with 177 in the sixth form. The school serves communities in the Rhymney valley. Nearly 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national average of 17% and 36.1% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. Very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. There are 25% of pupils with a special educational need. This is higher than the national average of 21.5%. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average of 2%.

The headteacher took up his post in 2013. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and two associate assistant headteachers.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to the curriculum and professional learning.

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

Lewis School Pengam has an inclusive ethos where most pupils feel safe and part of a community. Working relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and constructive. A majority of pupils make suitable progress in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. However, a minority of pupils do not engage fully in lessons and make insufficient progress. A few disrupt the learning of others. The school has recently introduced an innovative curriculum for Year 7 pupils, which is contributing to high levels of pupil engagement. However, the school does not have a co-ordinated approach to the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum.

Overall, performance in key stage 4 between 2014 and 2016 showed a steady trend of improvement although in 2017, performance declined. Over a three year period, in those indicators that include English and mathematics, performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has not compared well to that of pupils in similar schools and schools nationally.

The headteacher's vision to help all pupils to fulfil their potential and to be prepared for life after school is shared by a committed team of staff. However, leadership has not led to sufficient or sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, behaviour and the standards achieved by all pupils, including their skills.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</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 standards at key stage 4 for all pupils
- R2 Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills, including Welsh language skills
- R4 Increase the effectiveness and accountability of leaders at all levels
- R5 Increase the rigor of self-evaluation and precision of improvement planning
- R6 Provide a daily act of collective worship

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### **Standards: Adequate and needs improvement**

In lessons, many pupils make suitable progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of subjects. They demonstrate a secure recall of prior learning and a minority apply this usefully to new contexts. For instance, key stage 4 drama pupils draw on their knowledge of theatre practitioners to help them analyse 'Lord of the Flies' and develop a valuable understanding of character motivation. However, in a few subjects, the majority of pupils make insufficient progress during lessons and over time. In a few lessons, pupils do not complete enough work and their progress is too limited.

Most pupils listen to the teacher and their peers with respect. A minority of pupils use precise language and subject specific vocabulary confidently and consistently. For example, in Year 7 skills lessons, pupils discuss confidently and with suitable vocabulary the ways in which Japan dealt with the tsunami. However, whilst many pupils are enthusiastic to speak, they provide only brief verbal responses to teachers' questioning and do not speak in a fluent, considered way.

Many pupils use a suitable range of reading strategies to locate important facts in texts. A minority make effective use of inference and deduction usefully to support their understanding and interpretation of a range of written and visual texts, for instance when they discuss how a police film about knife crime conveys important messages to an audience. However, a minority of pupils have weak reading skills and find it difficult to interpret important messages in texts.

The majority of pupils produce extended writing that is technically secure and suitably structured. A few pupils write in a lively, engaging way showing a strong awareness of audience. For instance, in Year 8, a few pupils write in an entertaining way about what life would be like if they were confined to school because of a deadly virus. However, the majority of pupils make limited progress over time in improving the quality of their writing and make too many basic errors in their written work.

Many pupils carry out basic mathematical calculations effectively, for instance when they calculate simple interest. The majority of pupils set out work appropriately, use the four rules of number and manipulate fractions and decimals confidently. A minority lack confidence in their number skills and are uncertain of how to apply mathematical concepts in different situations. A minority do not show suitable precision when creating graphs and charts or make the most appropriate choices about how to present numerical information.

Many pupils make proficient and independent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to record and develop their learning. For example, a few pupils use mobile technology appropriately to record science demonstrations to support future work. Many pupils use their research skills suitably and understand that information found on the internet is not always reliable or accurate. Many pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to present their work well using ICT.

When provided with appropriate opportunities, many pupils show that they can work creatively. For example, in music, most Year 8 pupils persevere purposefully with a task to create a verse for the song 'Best Days of My Life'. They use their creative skills appropriately to produce imaginative rhyming couplets.

The school enters nearly all key stage 4 pupils for a vocational Welsh language qualification. However, their progress in developing Welsh language skills is weak. In lessons, the majority of pupils have a sound vocabulary but lack confidence in speaking or writing Welsh.

At the end of Year 11, most pupils progress to the sixth form or local further education college.

Between 2014 and 2016, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics improved. During this time, performance compared favourably to that of boys in similar schools. In 2017, performance declined in all indicators. In most indicators in 2017, performance does not compare well to that of boys in similar schools. In 2017, the performance in key stage 4 of pupils eligible for free school meals fell in every indicator. Over a three year period, the performance of this group of pupils in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has not compared well to that of pupils in similar schools and schools nationally.

Between 2014 and 2016, the performance of more able pupils improved. However, in 2017 the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades or equivalent at A\*-A fell and does not compare well to performance in similar schools. Pupils with additional learning needs do not make as much progress as expected.

Nearly all pupils in the sixth form show commitment, enthusiasm and a mature attitude to their studies. Many pupils work well independently and make valuable progress in lessons. These pupils have a good grasp of subject specific terms and use them confidently, for example when explaining the political impact of the Acts of Union in comparison with the current Wales-England relationship. The majority have higher order reading skills and can synthesise information from a range of texts and evidence, including media, print and photographic evidence.

Over the last three years, performance in the sixth form has been variable. Performance in the level 3 threshold has improved in the last two years and is above the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining three A\*-A grades has steadily improved over the last three years but remains below the average for similar schools. Performance in the average wider points score and in the proportion of pupils gaining three A\*-C grades has declined over the last three years and does not compare favourably to levels in similar schools.

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

The school is an inclusive and supportive community, where most pupils feel safe and secure. Many pupils believe that the school deals effectively with any bullying.

During the inspection, most pupils behaved well in lessons and around the school. However, just over half of pupils feel that inappropriate behaviour in lessons has a negative impact on their learning and the majority of pupils feel that behaviour of a minority of pupils at lunch times and break times is inappropriate. The number of fixed term exclusions is high, having increased significantly last year.

The majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and remain focused on their work during lessons. However, a minority of pupils do not engage fully in lessons and as a result do not make sufficient progress. A few disrupt the learning of others. Nearly all pupils in the sixth form are enthusiastic and mature in their attitudes to learning and develop well as independent learners. Elsewhere in the school, however, it is only in a minority of lessons that pupils develop their independent learning skills effectively.

Attendance improved in 2017 compared with that in the two previous years. However, it remains below that of similar schools. Persistent absence increased in 2017 and is above that of similar schools and Wales.

Most pupils understand clearly the benefits of healthy diet and exercise. Many pupils take part in a suitable range of physical activities. Most pupils appreciate the importance of on-line safety and the potential risks in using social media and the internet. Nearly all pupils feel part of the school community. Whilst pupil voice has influenced some important developments, such as the 'Pride of Pengam', the systematic involvement of pupils in decisions about the life and work of the school is at an early stage.

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

The quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Nearly all teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish constructive working relationships with pupils that help them gain confidence. Many manage pupils' behaviour effectively and create an engaging learning environment. These teachers provide clear explanations and focus appropriately on extending pupils' subject-specific vocabulary, for example when considering the causes and consequences of a tsunami.

Many teachers use questioning well to test pupils' recall and involve them in class discussions to help them develop their ideas. This helps pupils to acquire a secure understanding of the key principles and concepts of subjects. In a few cases, teachers' probing questions encourage pupils to think more deeply, to extend their responses and to develop their communication skills. For example, in a Year 7 communication lesson, the teacher challenges pupils to explain the meaning of language in 'The Tempest' and to suggest how lines could be spoken by characters to create an appropriate atmosphere in a scene. In a few lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities and are successful in ensuring that pupils understand challenging concepts. For example, in drama, the teacher supports key stage 4 pupils usefully to apply the ideas of Konstantin Stanislavski, a Russian theatre director, to their own improvised scenes.

The majority of teachers plan a suitable range of carefully-sequenced tasks and use resources effectively to engage pupils. These include creatively structured tasks to help pupils consider particular moral and social issues, such as the arguments for and against capital punishment. In these classes, teachers use an appropriate range of strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills. For example, in French, pupils are required to describe their personal qualities, hobbies and interests when writing a letter of application for a particular post.

In a minority of cases, teachers' expectations are too low and learning activities are not well planned. They do not provide pupils with a suitable degree of challenge and do not help pupils to develop their skills and understanding sufficiently. In these classes, teachers do not challenge pupils to extend their verbal responses and explain their ideas and particular concepts precisely enough and in depth. In a few classes, pupils do not have suitable opportunities to learn independently, or to work with others to discuss their ideas and solve problems.

In many lessons, teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and provide helpful and constructive verbal feedback to pupils to clarify and reinforce key concepts. For example, in music, teachers provide helpful guidance on how pupils can improve their compositions by including chords and a greater variety of musical notes.

The majority of teachers generally provide useful, diagnostic written feedback, which identifies clearly how pupils can improve their work. A minority of pupils respond well to teachers' comments and develop or redraft a particular piece of work successfully. However, the quality of teachers' written feedback varies too much and overall it has insufficient impact on the quality of pupils' work. In many cases, comments relate primarily to effort or instruct pupils to complete tasks. A minority of teachers do not explain clearly how pupils can improve the quality of their work. In too many cases, teachers' marking does not focus directly on improving pupils' literacy skills such as the depth, structure and presentation of their written work.

The new innovative Year 7 curriculum is helping to provide a smooth transition from primary school for many pupils and is contributing to high levels of pupil engagement. However, it is too early to judge its impact on improving the standards and skills of pupils. The key stage 4 curriculum provides a balanced range of courses, responding flexibly and effectively to the needs of many pupils in each cohort. However, the key stage 4 science curriculum does not meet the interests and abilities of a few pupils well enough or give them the opportunity to obtain an appropriate qualification. Provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is weak. This has limited the impact on the use of Welsh by pupils outside of Welsh lessons. Local partnership arrangements with other providers offer pupils in the sixth form a broad range of choice of A levels and vocational courses.

The school has suitable arrangements to identify and provide appropriate interventions for those pupils with weak skills and to monitor their progress. However, strategies to support the progressive development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum are not co-ordinated well enough. This area of the school's work remains a significant weakness in light of the underdeveloped literacy skills many pupils have on entry to the school. The school is implementing suitable strategies to develop pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum.

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

The school has an inclusive and supportive ethos that promotes positively the wellbeing of pupils.

The school has been responsive and taken prompt actions to address concerns about pupils' wellbeing. Provision for pupils with emotional and social or behavioural needs is supported well by suitably targeted interventions and learning experiences.



The school collaborates effectively with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils have access to an extensive range of intervention and support to address their needs.

The school has comprehensive systems in place to deal with any instances of bullying. However, approaches to address low-level disruption in lessons are not consistently implemented across the school.

The school has a suitable tracking system to monitor the progress made by groups of pupils. This has recently been refined through the inclusion of personalised intervention strategies for pupils at risk of missing their targets. There is no co-ordinated strategy for the support of more able and talented pupils. As a result, these pupils do not have sufficient access to a range of targeted enrichment experiences to broaden their horizons.

The personal and social education programme is valuable in supporting the moral, social and cultural development of pupils and is effective in promoting diversity and equality. An example of this is creation of a short film by the school's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning+ (LGBTQ+) group to provide guidance for all schools in the borough.

Interim and annual reports keep parents well informed about their children's progress in school. The school provides pupils and parents with relevant information about option choices at key stage 4 and post 16.

Learning support assistants provide valuable intervention programmes for pupils with additional learning needs. A useful phonetics programme provides effective support for vulnerable pupils with specific needs. This has helped improve the wellbeing, self-esteem and personal skills of most pupils who access this provision.

The annual review process for pupils with special educational needs meets statutory requirements. Individual education plans provide staff with helpful information on pupils' strengths and the aspects of learning in which they have difficulty. They include appropriate strategies to support specific pupils.

The school has recently strengthened its procedures for managing the attendance of pupils. The attendance officer and the Educational Welfare Officer lead the provision of systems and processes to support parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly. As a result, attendance is improving.

The school makes effective arrangements for the very few pupils educated other than at school (EOTAS) who might otherwise struggle to remain in school. This leads to worthwhile qualifications for these pupils. However, there is limited monitoring by school based staff of the progress of pupils engaged in off-site programmes.

The school maintains beneficial links with former pupils, who are keen to support current learners in their social development. There is a wide range of enrichment activities on offer to develop pupils' social and creative skills. These include involvement in a popular intergenerational project that provides lunches for elderly people in the community.

The school council has recently been restructured. However, it does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to communicate their views on what and how they learn.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. However, the school does not meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship.

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

The headteacher has developed a clear vision for the school based upon helping pupils of all abilities to fulfil their potential and to be prepared for life after school. With support from the senior leadership team, this vision is communicated clearly and understood well by most staff. This has contributed suitably to the commitment and positive morale of the staff.

The responsibilities of the senior leadership team are distributed equitably and there are suitable opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills through the extended leadership team. However, leadership has not led to sufficient or sustained improvements in important areas of the school's work such as the quality of teaching, the behaviour of pupils and the standards achieved by all pupils, including the development of their skills.

The school has a clear line-management structure with regular, timetabled meetings. Although there are suitable, common, standing agenda items, these meetings focus too much on operational matters and do not lead to any clear action points. Apart from the annual review of examination performance, senior leaders do not hold middle leaders to account robustly enough.

There is too much variability in the quality and effectiveness of pastoral and subject leaders. A minority do not understand their role fully and have not been able to provide sufficient, sustained improvements in their areas of responsibility. Many subject leaders do not have a firm grasp on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the areas that they lead.

The governors are supportive of the school and have a reasonable understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They are developing a better understanding of pupil performance data and are beginning to use this understanding to challenge the school on its performance in key areas.

The school has a suitable programme of quality assurance procedures, which includes frequent and relevant opportunities to gather first hand evidence. Although these monitoring activities are generally suitable, lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work do not focus sharply enough on the progress pupils make and the development of their skills.

The school self-evaluation report provides a detailed and realistic analysis of pupils' performance. However, it does not identify clearly enough strengths and areas for improvement in key areas, including the quality of teaching and assessment, and the development of pupils' skills. The whole-school improvement plan focuses clearly on the school's improvement priorities but it is not clear how progress made towards achieving those improvements will be monitored and evaluated.

The helpful 'department on a page' document provides a concise overview of a department's performance data in particular. However, few departmental evaluation reports make reference to standards seen in lessons and in pupils' books. Many departments do not evaluate the impact that teaching, and occasionally for example the curriculum in science, has on pupil outcomes. In addition, many departmental improvement plans lack measurable success criteria and clear milestones against which to evaluate progress. The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning at middle leadership level is too variable.

The school has made limited progress on nearly all of the recommendations made following the previous inspection in 2012.

The school works extensively in collaboration with other schools at regional and national level, supporting a variety of external educational programmes. Although these opportunities have been beneficial to teachers' professional knowledge, they have not had a sufficient impact on provision and practice, including the teaching of new GCSE specifications.

Senior leaders and the school's finance officer consider expenditure carefully and monitor it regularly against school priorities. Governors exercise their role well in relation to the school's budget. They monitor financial activity carefully and hold school leaders properly to account.

There are appropriate numbers of teaching and support staff and most teach within their main subject specialisms. Leaders have considered closely the costs of the existing curriculum and made suitable adjustments to make it more effective and efficient. The school has appropriate arrangements for managing the performance of staff with objectives linking suitably to the school's priorities.

Plans for the use of specific grants are appropriate and suitably detailed. The pupil development grant has mostly been used to increase staffing, including an attendance officer, to support pupils. The school has secured an improvement in attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals but not in the standards they achieve.

## 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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

© Crown Copyright 2018: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 19/03/2018