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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on
Cantonian High School
Fairwater Road
Fairwater
Cardiff
CF5 3JR**

Date of inspection: 15 - 18 February 2011

by

Mr Peter G Carter

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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

Cantonian High School is an English medium, 11-19 mixed, community school serving residential areas on the western side of Cardiff. It has 737 learners at present including 157 in the sixth form. Numbers have fallen steadily since the last inspection in January 2005 due to demographic changes, however, the number of students in the sixth form has increased.

Learners represent the full ability range although a relatively large proportion is of average or lower ability. Around two-fifths come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds with just over a quarter entitled to free school meals. Nearly a third of pupils are on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register, about an eighth with statements of SEN or on School Action Plus. These figures are significantly higher than local and national averages.

A number of pupils are admitted following transfer from other secondary schools. At present, around an eighth of the pupils in key stages 3 and 4 joined the school at times other than the start of year 7.

There is an Access Base which provides specialist support for pupils with autism. There is also a Specialist Resource Base for pupils in key stage 3 and 4 with severe or moderate learning difficulties.

No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Around 13% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Although this figure has increased recently it remains below the percentage in the local authority (LA). Relatively few pupils are taught English as an additional language.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Cantonian High School is £4525 which compares with a maximum of £4823 and a minimum of £3807 for secondary schools in Cardiff. The school has the third highest budget per pupil out of the 20 secondary schools in Cardiff.

The school's vision statement is 'The best from each, success for all.'

Summary

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

Current performance

This is a good school because:

- most pupils gain a good range of qualifications which are appropriate to their abilities and interests;
- pupils' wellbeing is a high priority and all pupils can learn in a safe, secure and inclusive environment; and
- members of staff support pupils' progress very well.

Prospects for improvement

The school has good prospects for improvement because of the:

- effective leadership of the headteacher and senior staff;
- high quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement; and
- strong and well established practice of partnership working.

Recommendations

In order to continue to make progress the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Continue to improve standards, particularly in KS4, in respect of:
- attainment in English and mathematics;
 - performance of girls and pupils entitled to free school meals; and
 - communication and numeracy skills.
- R2 Continue to make progress in improving attendance.
- R3 Further reduce the occurrence of low level disruption in lessons.
- R4 Improve further the use made of assessment in lessons as a tool for planning ongoing support for individual pupils.
- R5 Improve accommodation, particularly toilets, changing rooms and facilities for physical education.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Standards are good in key stage 3 and in the sixth form. In key stage 4, strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

In key stage 3 in the last three years, the core subject indicator (CSI)¹ has been above averages attained in similar schools in Wales. Although results in the core subjects were a little below local and national averages they compared favourably to averages attained in the family of schools². Results in English and science have

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

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

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risen steadily during this period but performance in mathematics fell slightly in 2010. Results at the end of key stage 3 in 2010 show pupils made good progress in English and science compared to their performance at the end of key stage 2.

The percentages gaining National Curriculum (NC) Level 6 or higher in each core subject at the end of key stage 3 in 2010 exceeded family averages but were below local and national averages.

Although performance in key stage 4 has been below local and national averages, the percentages of pupils who achieved the Levels 1 and 2 thresholds³ and the average wider points score⁴ increased significantly in the last three years and are close to averages in the family of schools. Nearly all pupils gained recognised qualifications. In the same period, the percentages gaining the CSI and the Level 2 threshold including English and mathematics fell. These results are below averages in the family of schools.

In 2010, the average wider points score and the percentage of pupils gaining the Level 2 threshold exceeded expectations based on prior attainment. However, attainment of the CSI and the Level 2 threshold including English and mathematics was significantly below expectations based on assessments at key stages 2 and 3.

In the sixth form, 93% of students achieved the Level 3 threshold⁵ in the last three years. This is broadly in line with local and national averages. Their average wider points score rose steadily in this period but remains below local and national figures. The proportion of students entered for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) also increased and the most recent pass rate of 97% exceeds the national average.

At all stages, differences between boys' and girls' performance are significantly lower than average differences locally, nationally and in the family of schools. This is especially marked in key stage 3 where boys generally outperform girls. In key stage 4, girls' achievements are well below expectations based on averages in the family of schools. In the sixth form, girls generally outperform boys but by narrower margins than are usually found locally and nationally. Overall, the relatively high performance of boys is a particular strength of this school.

Standards achieved in the CSI in key stage 3 by pupils entitled to free school meals are in line with corresponding figures locally, nationally and in the family of schools. In key stage 4, the standards achieved by these pupils are well below averages locally, nationally and in the family of schools. In both stages, pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) achieve standards which are good in relation to their abilities.

Many pupils continue their education into the sixth form whilst over 13% enter further education. Nearly 90% remain engaged in education, employment or training at the end of key stage 4. This exceeds the estimated figure published in the most recent

school meals, living in deprived areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds and having special educational needs.

³ The Level 1 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A* to G. The Level 2 threshold represents the equivalent of 5 GCSEs at grade A* to C.

⁴ The average wider points score accommodates all externally approved qualifications.

⁵ The Level 3 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 1 A levels at grade A to E.

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Annual Report of the Chief Inspector (Estyn 2011). At the end of year 13 around 3% are not in education, employment or training compared to 7% across Wales.

In key stage 3, pupils make good progress in developing communication, thinking and numeracy skills. Most pupils develop communication skills which are in line with their abilities. However, communication and numeracy skills are less well developed in key stage 4. The writing skills of pupils of average and lower ability show considerable variation across the curriculum. Where standards are lowest there is little extended writing, presentation is untidy and there are persistent errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. In the sixth form, most students demonstrate a good range of relevant skills at levels appropriate to their abilities.

Standards achieved in Welsh (second language) in key stage 3 are low however, the results gained in key stage 4, show an improving trend. The percentage gaining grade C in the short GCSE course has increased from 16% to 54%. The quality of incidental Welsh used by learners is good.

Wellbeing: Good

Many pupils comment that they feel safe and secure in school. They have an appropriate understanding of a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and keeping fit. However, healthy eating options are limited in the canteen.

Attendance rates are below the rates of similar schools. Initiatives to improve attendance have had limited impact. There has been a marginal improvement in attendance rates following further intervention strategies.

Behaviour has improved significantly in recent years. Appropriate intervention strategies are quickly put in place following a more consistent approach to behaviour management and closer tracking and monitoring of behavioural incidents. However, low-level disruption continues to impede learning in a few lessons.

Exclusion rates have also been reduced significantly in recent years. The school deals well with a high percentage of pupils transferred from other schools, particularly in key stage 4.

There are extensive links with the community. A number of pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form are involved actively in initiatives within the local community. Pupils of all abilities share and enjoy these opportunities. They benefit by improving their confidence and social skills.

Pupils are encouraged actively to contribute to school life. The school council is a meaningful voice and is involved in reviewing policies, interviewing staff and improving the school environment. The school takes note of pupils' comments following regular questionnaires on school issues.

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

There is an extensive range of curricular opportunities that meets fully the needs and aspirations of learners, including those with SEN. In key stage 3, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and enables pupils to transfer easily from primary school. The 'Emotional Intelligence Learning Skills' programme helps pupils in key stage 3 to make good progress.

The school meets the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure and offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses in partnership with other providers to learners in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Specialist courses in hairdressing and painting and decorating are taught in the school. Almost all learners study academic and vocational subjects of their choice. The advanced level WBQ and well-planned work experience programme help prepare learners to move on to the next stage in their education or employment.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances the learning experiences for many pupils. These include sport, music, drama and international visits as well as homework clubs in most subjects. The Learning Centre offers good opportunities for out-of-hours learning to all pupils.

The school plans well the application and delivery of skills across the curriculum. This includes effectively targeted support and qualifications for many pupils. Provision for Welsh is good. All pupils have timetabled lessons and many pupils gain a qualification in Welsh in key stage 4. Many teachers include examples of the Welsh culture in lessons.

Global projects with international schools, an effective ECO club and opportunity to gain a qualification in global citizenship demonstrates well the school's commitment to sustainable development.

Teaching: Good

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and generally use it well to help pupils maintain enthusiasm in lessons. Many plan their teaching well so that individual pupils, including those with ALN, receive effective support. Nearly all teachers make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils. In a few classes teaching is not sufficiently well organised or stimulating to keep pupils interested in the work.

Most teachers establish good working relationships with pupils, and many use a range of methods and resources to enhance their learning. Many teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves and to improve their skills in communication.

Pupils' work is marked regularly by most teachers and the majority add comments and targets for improvement. Pupils are often encouraged to assess their own work and improve it. Many teachers also encourage pupils to assess the work of their peers.

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Nearly all teachers assess the progress of pupils during lessons. Many use the outcomes to adapt the pace or content of the lesson and to give attention to individuals who need additional support or challenge. A small minority of teachers makes insufficient use of assessment in lessons in subsequent teaching.

The school has robust systems to record, analyse, and track the achievement and progress of pupils. All pupils are supported well by a mentor who meets with them regularly to review their progress and help them achieve personal targets. Parents are kept well informed about the wellbeing and progress of their children. Reports are of very good quality, often with useful subject-specific targets for pupils to achieve.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

Pupils receive very good levels of support and guidance in a caring atmosphere. Form teachers, learning leaders and transition leaders know their pupils and respond appropriately to concerns. The Inclusion Centre and outside agencies provide support of high quality for vulnerable pupils. This is managed very well.

The school promotes actively the health and wellbeing of pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through topical themes in assemblies. Pupils show respect for one another. The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The high standard of provision for ALN is managed very well. The inclusive ethos of the school encourages integration. The Specialist Resource Base, Access Base and the Learning House are significant features of the provision. Pupils with severe learning difficulties receive highly effective individual learning programmes in the Specialist Resource Base. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are supported very successfully in the Access Base. They are an integral part of the school. Teachers and support staff are particularly enthusiastic in these bases.

The Learning House is a provision of high quality for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who are in danger of permanent exclusion. It has enabled them to stay in education as well as impacting significantly on reducing exclusion rates.

The quality and extent of this provision is at the forefront of the sector in terms of its impact on improving learning and social skills. This innovative provision has been shared and implemented by other schools from both within and outside the LA. The Access Base and the Learning House have been recognised by the LA as models of excellence for other schools.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a fully inclusive community where pupils receive equality of access to everything it provides irrespective of their background and ability. Good progress is being made in challenging the stereotypical nature of pupils' aspirations and addressing the gender gaps in course choices. Also, much is being done to address successfully all aspects of oppressive behaviour.

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The internal accommodation is, overall, of good quality, maintained well and meets the needs of pupils. Wall displays in many areas enhance the learning environment. However, the pupils' toilets and changing rooms, as well as the facilities for physical education and much of the buildings' outer fabric, need refurbishment. There are appropriate levels of learning resources across all subjects.

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

The head teacher provides strong leadership and clear direction for the work of the school. She receives very good support from the Senior Management Team whose members work well together. Appropriate arrangements are in place to facilitate effective links between senior and middle managers. Improvements in performance in key stage 3 and in certain areas in key stage 4 and the sixth form indicate the effectiveness of strategic direction. Governors work closely with staff and learners. They act as critical friends of the school and fulfil their legal obligations. Many national and local priorities are addressed successfully. However, limited progress has been made in improving the performance of particular groups of pupils in key stage 4 and overall rates of attendance.

Improving quality: Good

The headteacher and senior managers have a clear overview of performance in all areas of the school. Robust self-evaluation procedures are embedded in strategic planning and identify areas of strength and areas which need development. The school actively seeks the views of pupils, parents, carers and staff through questionnaires and evaluations and action is taken when appropriate.

There are clear links between school and departmental development plans. These plans set out appropriate priorities for school improvement. Performance data is used effectively to set challenging targets. Clear strategies are in place to secure continued progress. Senior and middle managers review progress systematically against targets. The involvement of the LA in cyclical departmental reviews has supported the drive for improvement at all levels. Classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' books are used to inform and promote best practice in all areas of learning and teaching. However, there are inconsistencies in a few subjects.

Appropriate provision is available for all staff members to attend a range of training courses and opportunities exist for staff to lead on areas for development. This has increased the accountability for change. Arrangements for all staff to be involved in networks of professional practice are developing successfully. This has enabled them to learn from each other. Sharing of professional knowledge within the school and with other schools and partners is a strength.

The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations since the last inspection although the improvement in pupil attendance is limited.

Partnership working: Excellent

The leadership team has a very clear vision for collaborative working and has developed excellent links with many relevant external partners.

Links with secondary schools, workplace providers and local colleges within the LA are very strong. Around 20% of pupils in key stage 4 and a few sixth-form students access courses outside of the school. Overall, the impact of this on the standards, attendance and behaviour of these pupils has been recognised as sector-leading by the LA.

Parents are core partners and the school operates an open-door policy encouraging them to visit the school to discuss their child's progress. Despite this, not all parents are involved as much as they could be with their child's learning and development.

Pastoral and curricular links with partner primary schools are very effective and focus well on improving the standards and wellbeing of pupils. Joint projects and regular meetings to share information between parents, staff and pupils are strong features of the equal partnership that exists between these schools.

Links with the community and local employers are good. These organisations provide specific opportunities that are matched very well to the needs of learners. The school also benefits from very well-established links with two initial teacher training institutions.

The quality and effectiveness of the collaborative provision is excellent. Many of the school's arrangements for Learning Pathways 14-19, devised in partnership with two other secondary schools and a college of further education, have now been adopted by the LA for use in their guidance for partnership provision. In this respect, the school's partnership working is helping influence practice within the LA across the secondary sector.

Resource management: Adequate

Staffing is sufficient to teach all aspects of the school's broad curriculum. Staff, including teaching assistants and non-teaching staff, are managed and deployed effectively. Their development needs are appraised and supported well through robust systems.

The school manages its resources well and has balanced the effectiveness of its provision against costs. It makes very good use of any money it receives and is innovative in its overall use of funding.

The school is working very well with the LA to reduce its deficit budget over time, while ensuring the quality of accommodation, education and resources for pupils are maintained. Many pupils report that they have enough books and equipment, including computers, to do their work. All spending is planned carefully and monitored rigorously by the governing body and LA.

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The school generally manages its resources well. However, attainment in certain important areas in key stage 4 is low, particularly for girls, and so value for money is adequate overall.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

A total of 11 questionnaires completed by either parents or carers were returned. This is a small proportion of the total number of parents. Many responses (86%) were positive or very positive.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by around 28% of the pupils who were selected at random. A total of 202 responses to the questionnaire were submitted.

Most pupils feel encouraged to do things for themselves and take on responsibility.

Many pupils:

- feel safe in school and have someone to talk to if they feel worried;
- think that they have plenty of opportunities to get regular exercise;
- believe that they are doing well, their teachers help them to make progress and they have enough books and equipment to do their work;
- think staff members help them understand and respect people from other backgrounds;
- think the school helps prepare them for the next stage in education or to start work; and
- feel they were given good advice in key stage 3 to choose courses in key stage 4.

A majority of pupils believes the school deals well with any bullying whilst a similar proportion feels that staff members treat them fairly and with respect.

Around half:

- think the school helps them to keep healthy;
- believe that homework helps them to improve their work;
- feel that pupils behave well; and
- think the school listens to their views and makes the changes they suggest.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Peter Carter	Reporting Inspector
Julia Longville	Team Inspector
Alan Cooke	Team Inspector
Gwyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Garry Maher	Peer Inspector
Judith Penikett	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