



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

A report on

**Maesteg School
Ffordd Dysgu
Maesteg
Bridgend
CF34 OLQ**

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by

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

About Maesteg School

Maesteg School is an English-medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school to the north of Bridgend. Pupils from the Llynfi valley attend the school. There are currently 1,036 pupils on roll, including 142 in the sixth form. These numbers are similar to those at the time of the last inspection in November 2012.

Around a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national average of 16.4%. Around half live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The proportion of pupils that have a special educational need is 21.7%, which is close to the national average of 22.9%. Around 1% of pupils have statements of special educational needs. This figure is lower than the average of 2.2% for Wales as a whole. The school has resourced provision for ten pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Around 1% of pupils have English as an additional language. Nearly all pupils come from a white British background. Only a very few pupils are fluent in Welsh.

The headteacher has been in post since 2015. The senior leadership team consists of a deputy headteacher and four assistant headteachers. Three middle leaders are currently acting as part of an extended senior team. The school is a pioneer school and is working with 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

Maesteg school has developed a clear vision for raising pupils' aspirations and achievement through effective teaching and strong pastoral support. Across the staff, there is shared focus on using collaboration, research and innovation to develop an effective curriculum and good quality teaching. The school's strategies have been successful in securing, for example, high levels of attendance and improved outcomes at key stage 4, as well as teaching that promotes pupil progress well in the majority of cases. However, in a minority of instances, the school's provision is not consistently effective enough in promoting positive attitudes to learning and strong progress for pupils.

The school has effective provision for supporting vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs. It fosters good behaviour well, and most pupils act with respect and maturity around the school. A minority of pupils, however, lack resilience and independence in their learning and this impedes their progress.

Arrangements for line management, self-evaluation and improvement planning are generally robust, and this has helped leaders to make a positive impact on several important aspects of the school's work. There is too much inconsistency, however, in how precisely and effectively leaders identify and address shortcomings in teaching and the standards that pupils achieve in lessons.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve standards and the progress that pupils make in lessons in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills.

R2 Improve pupils' resilience and independence in learning.

R3 Improve the effectiveness of teaching.

R4 Ensure that middle leaders are held fully accountable for raising standards and improving the effectiveness of teaching in their areas of responsibility.

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: Adequate and needs improvement

In lessons, the majority of pupils make sound progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. They recall their prior learning well and apply their understanding successfully to new contexts. A few pupils make strong progress, for example when they develop their performance techniques to compare the approaches of Brecht and Stanislavski in drama. A minority of pupils, however, do not engage positively in their learning and complete too little work. As a result, they make only limited progress in lessons.

The majority of pupils make appropriate contributions to class discussion. They express themselves clearly and use subject terminology suitably. A few make highly articulate and thoughtful verbal contributions, such as when they discuss the difference between the social reaction to street art and graffiti. In a minority of cases, however, pupils are either reluctant to participate in discussion activities or make only brief, underdeveloped responses.

Many pupils use a range of reading strategies appropriately. They can identify relevant information from a range of sources. A minority are able to combine and summarise information confidently, for example when, in science, they examine the different causes of heat loss in the home. A few pupils use inference and deduction well in order to reach insightful conclusions. However, a minority of pupils do not use reading skills well enough to identify relevant information and often rely too heavily on copying out text.

The technical accuracy of the majority of pupils' writing is sound. They structure extended writing appropriately and show a secure sense of purpose and audience, for example when exploring the social and economic impact of the construction industry. A minority of pupils, however, make frequent basic errors. They produce only brief and underdeveloped written responses. In a few instances, pupils do not make appropriate language choices for their purpose and audience, and consequently their writing does not strike the correct tone.

The majority of pupils have sound number skills and apply them appropriately across the curriculum when given the opportunity. For example, they calculate the effect of double glazing and cavity wall insulation on household bills. When given the opportunity, pupils use their information and communication (ICT) skills suitably, for example to digitally manipulate images in photography or analyse historical data using spreadsheets. Pupils develop their creativity appropriately across the curriculum, such as when they design promotional material to promote gender equality as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate skills challenge.

The majority of pupils recall basic Welsh vocabulary and sentence structure appropriately. A few are confident in their pronunciation and produce suitable extended writing. A minority achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh.

At the end of key stage 4, most pupils continue their education in school or college.

At key stage 4, outcomes have fluctuated over the last four years. In 2015, performance in all indicators compared well to that in similar schools. However, there was an overall decline in performance in 2016 and 2017. Over this period, performance was below that in similar schools in many indicators. In 2018, however, performance at key stage 4 improved and compares favourably to similar schools.

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals at key stage 4 has fluctuated in recent years. In 2015 and 2016, the performance of this group of pupils compared well with their counterparts in similar schools. However, over the last two years, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has been well below that of the same group of pupils in similar schools in many indicators.

At key stage 4, the performance of boys has generally been well above that of boys in similar schools over the last four years. Girls' performance declined in 2016 and 2017 and was well below that of their counterparts in similar schools during this period. However, their performance improved in 2018 and now compares favourably to the same group of pupils in similar schools.

In the sixth form, pupils show strong levels of independence and organisation and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. They work collaboratively to support each other's learning successfully. Performance in both the level 3 threshold and average wider points score compares very well with that in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving three grades at A*-C has decreased over the last two years, but remains in line with that in similar schools. The proportion achieving three grades at A*-A has generally been slightly below that in similar schools in recent years.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils feel well supported by the school. They know to whom they can turn if they require help, feel safe in school and believe that the school deals well with any issues. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and there are strong levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. Most pupils are polite and courteous to visitors, adults and each other. They move around the school in a calm and orderly manner.

A majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They engage well in lessons and show pride in their work. These pupils demonstrate resilience, and persevere when faced with challenging tasks. They collaborate well when undertaking pair or group tasks. However, a minority of pupils do not show enough independence in their learning and are over-reliant on their teachers. These pupils lack focus in lessons, do not maintain concentration and produce an insufficient amount of work. A few pupils' work is poorly presented.

The student parliament has a positive impact on school life. It canvasses pupils' views on a wide range of issues, such as school facilities, the structure of the school day and the behaviour policy. It has contributed appropriately to changes such as the removal of plastic water bottles. Pupils develop their leadership skills suitably by undertaking roles such as sports leaders, members of the student parliament or anti-bullying leaders. Their involvement in work with local charities such as those that support the homeless helps them to develop as ethically informed citizens.

Rates of pupil attendance have compared consistently well with those in similar schools over recent years. In particular, the attendance of boys is well above the average for boys in similar schools.

Many pupils in the sixth form show a strong commitment to the school and a mature attitude towards their studies. They are positive learning role models for younger pupils, particularly in their leadership role as prefects. They extend their leadership skills well by developing their own action plan for how the sixth form will contribute to school life.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The majority of teaching is effective in securing sound progress for pupils. In these lessons, teachers form strong working relationships with their classes and establish clearly understood routines that have a positive impact on learning. They plan sequences of activities carefully, based on their thorough knowledge of pupils' abilities, interests and recent progress. These teachers have high expectations, and set pupils challenging tasks that promote progress well. They use a variety of approaches that engage pupils suitably in their learning and develop well both their subject understanding and their skills.

The majority of teachers deploy effective strategies to develop pupils' confidence, resilience and independence. Where necessary, they manage pupils' behaviour successfully. They use suitable questioning techniques to assess pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. These teachers provide pupils with useful verbal and written feedback, and monitor appropriately how well pupils improve their work in light of this guidance.

In a minority of instances, teaching is not sufficiently effective. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. They set undemanding tasks that do not engage pupils well enough and limit the progress that they can make. They do not use questioning well enough to improve pupils' understanding and develop their verbal skills. In these lessons, teachers do not challenge sufficiently off-task behaviour or lack of engagement. They do not provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve their work, and do not monitor their progress closely enough.

The school's curriculum builds well on pupils' previous learning experiences. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils are provided with a wide range of academic and vocational courses. There are beneficial curriculum arrangements for the most vulnerable pupils. The school works effectively with local schools and colleges to provide a broad range of courses in the sixth form.

As part of its role as a curriculum pioneer, the school has recently reviewed suitably the key stage 3 curriculum. The Year 7 curriculum is built on a rationale of providing pupils with purposeful learning experiences that are enjoyable, challenging and relevant to their everyday lives. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil outcomes and engagement. At key stage 3, more able pupils are provided for well through the study of computing and a second modern foreign language.

The school provides a wide range of valuable extra-curricular opportunities, such as a drama club, revision sessions and a range of popular sporting clubs. In addition, local and overseas educational visits contribute well to pupils' development. For example, visits to Southerndown Beach and Bath Fashion Museum help to engage Year 7 pupils at the start of their thematic projects. Most pupils in Year 10 participate in a period of beneficial work experience which enhances their employability skills and raises their aspirations.

Provision for the development of pupils' literacy skills is well co-ordinated and many subject areas provide useful opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate these skills. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their numerical problem-solving skills within mathematics lessons, and they are provided with a few worthwhile opportunities to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, in geography, pupils analyse prosperity data for an area of Kenya and use this information to write a persuasive letter to the Prime Minister, giving reasons why improving living conditions in that area should be a priority for the government. However, in general, there is too much inconsistency in the level of challenge offered in numeracy tasks across the curriculum. Welsh Baccalaureate skills challenge lessons provide a valuable range of opportunities for pupils to develop their wider skills, for example personal organisation and working with others.

The school has suitable arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils who are identified as needing support with basic literacy and numeracy skills are provided with beneficial intervention programmes.

Pupils benefit from suitable opportunities to enhance their understanding of Welsh heritage and culture, for example through participation in competitions with the Urdd, the annual Eisteddfod, visits to Glanllyn and learning about Welsh heroes and the Rebecca riots. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons are limited.

In a minority of subjects, there are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills. For example, in physical education pupils use a range of ICT software to analyse their performance and to present information in a variety of formats.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Maesteg School is an inclusive and caring community. It has communicated clearly its vision that Maesteg pupils should be 'motivated to strive'. The school works hard to ensure that pupils' wellbeing needs are met through its commitment to pastoral care and inclusion.

The school monitors pupil progress closely. It makes beneficial use of assessment information to provide valuable interventions for groups of pupils, and this has contributed well to an improvement in 2018 outcomes. This system has recently been refined further to identify personalised intervention strategies for pupils at risk of underachievement. This is starting to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of these strategies. Interim and annual reports keep parents well informed about their child's progress. They include useful information regarding pupils' academic progress and attitudes to learning, and identify suitable individual targets for improvement.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely. It deploys a range of beneficial strategies to promote the value of good attendance and support vulnerable pupils. This has helped the school to secure consistently high levels of attendance in recent years.

Over the last two years, the school has revised suitably its systems for fostering positive behaviour. This includes the development of approaches to managing behaviour that help pupils understand the consequences of their behaviour and rebuild relationships with staff.

The school provides useful advice and guidance for pupils at key transition points to help them make informed choices about their learning and career pathways. This includes individual interviews with pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 and a 'Careers Week' in Year 7, which makes beneficial use of local businesses to raise pupils' awareness and aspirations.

The school has effective provision to support pupils with additional learning needs which has a positive impact on the outcomes these pupils achieve. For example, 'The Oasis' provides comprehensive support for pupils with ASD. Targeted interventions and learning experiences across all key stages meet these pupils' academic, social and pastoral needs well. Individual educational plans contain relevant, measurable targets and appropriate strategies for teachers to support pupils in their lessons.

The school provides extensive support for vulnerable pupils, for example valuable nurture provision for those requiring emotional support. Furthermore, the school provides beneficial alternative curriculum provision for pupils at risk of disengagement through 'MAC' (Maesteg Alternative Curriculum).

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. This includes music and drama activities, video animation and editing, engineering and a role-playing game club.

The personal and social education programme contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This provision is planned carefully and themes are delivered through a valuable programme of regular and dedicated 'Health and Wellbeing' lessons. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about and reflect on a wide range of ethical, local and global issues. The programme also provides pupils with beneficial opportunities to learn about and understand prejudice and discrimination so that they respect diversity and the rights of others. For example, the anti-bullying ambassadors work effectively in offering peer support. This programme is supplemented further by beneficial partnerships with a range of external agencies such as Stonewall and Show Racism the Red Card.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have developed a clear, well-understood vision based on raising pupil's aspirations through effective teaching and learning. This vision is underpinned by a strong desire to innovate and develop

provision in a way that is informed by research. This has had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, including securing high levels of attendance and the improved key stage four outcomes in 2018. However, leaders have not secured consistently strong enough outcomes in some other important areas, such as the impact of teaching on pupil progress, the attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils and the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The headteacher involves all staff in decision-making processes, for example through the staff wellbeing group. This helps to ensure that all staff understand their individual role in realising the senior leadership team's vision. Leadership roles and responsibilities are defined clearly and understood by all. Line management arrangements are generally robust and meetings at all levels focus clearly on the school's improvement priorities. Classroom teachers are also expected to account routinely for the performance of their classes. Performance management objectives focus suitably on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. However, overall, the effectiveness of leaders in securing consistently positive attitudes to learning and effective teaching varies too much.

The school undertakes a range of useful strategies to evaluate its performance. As well as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, it seeks regularly the views of pupils regarding both pastoral issues and their progress in lessons. Leaders review pupil assessment data closely and robustly. These processes help to give leaders at all levels a generally sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, they identify appropriate improvement priorities and monitor progress towards targets suitably. However, there is too much variation in how rigorously leaders evaluate the impact of teaching on the progress that pupils make. This reduces their ability to identify precisely enough the specific aspects that need improvement. The school does not engage with or take account of the views of parents well enough.

As part of its role as a pioneer school, the school has reviewed and refined its approaches to professional learning suitably. In particular, it has developed a strong focus on the use of action research to inform and improve practice. This is starting to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching. Staff are provided with a range of suitable development opportunities, including training for aspiring senior and middle leaders. There is a useful range of opportunities for staff to share good practice both within and outside of the school and this work is supported well by a variety of strategic partnerships. The school evaluates suitably the impact of its professional learning activities.

The governing body is informed suitably of the work of the school and has a sound understanding of its strengths and areas for development. There are useful arrangements for individual governors to be linked to the school's improvement priorities and monitor progress in these areas. This helps governors to understand the vision of the senior leadership team. The governing body provides valuable support for and suitable challenge to the school

The school is staffed and resourced appropriately. The headteacher, governing body and business manager consider spending plans carefully and monitor expenditure closely. Grant funding such as the pupil development grant is allocated and evaluated suitably. This has had a positive impact on the wellbeing of vulnerable pupils although it has had insufficient impact on their outcomes at key stage 4.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

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

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