



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

A report on

Eastern High School

**Eastern Community Campus
Trowbridge Road
Cardiff
CF3 1QP**

Date of inspection: December 2022

by

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

About Eastern High School

Name of provider	Eastern High School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1162
Pupils of statutory school age	1162
Number in sixth form	*
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%)	51.3%
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%)	19.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.6%
Date of headteacher appointment	09/01/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	12/08/2014
Start date of inspection	12/05/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Staff at Eastern High School place a high priority on pupils' well-being and provide them with high levels of care, support and guidance. They know their pupils well, and many teachers plan their lessons carefully to capture pupils' imagination and ensure they make good progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. Provision for those with additional learning needs (ALN) is particularly well-coordinated and effective. In general, staff are calm and foster positive working relationships with pupils. As a result, many pupils respond positively to the opportunities offered to them and behave well in lessons and around the school.

In a majority of cases, pupils make strong progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. However, the provision for developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, Welsh and digital skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped. While pupils develop their understanding of the importance of exercise and a healthy diet well, they do not have enough opportunities to learn about matters associated with sexual health or drug misuse.

A majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and there are high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities such as sports, musical shows and debates. The school has suitable procedures to ensure pupils' attendance and staff work constructively with parents to improve this aspect if necessary. However, a few pupils do not attend regularly enough or avoid certain lessons when they are in school, which restricts their progress.

The headteacher communicates his vision for each pupil to flourish and reach their potential clearly. In general, he is supported well by the rest of the senior leadership team. They have a suitable understanding of what needs to be done to improve certain aspects of the school's work. However, when judging the quality of teaching, leaders do not consider its impact on pupils' learning closely enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen systems to improve pupils' attendance, and reduce persistent absenteeism and internal truancy
- R2 Improve the provision for developing pupils' skills across the curriculum including their command of Welsh
- R3 Strengthen the provision for personal and social education
- R4 Ensure that leaders understand how to evaluate the school's provision in light of its impact on pupils' learning

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

In a majority of cases, pupils make strong progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. In many lessons, pupils recall prior learning accurately and build on this well. They respond positively to feedback from their teachers to improve their work or extend their learning. In a few instances, pupils' poor attendance or their unwillingness to attend lessons limits the progress they make. Pupils with additional learning needs respond very well to the carefully tailored provision offered to them and many make strong progress against their targets.

Many pupils listen attentively to their teacher. They respond thoughtfully to differing points of view in discussions and communicate their thoughts and ideas clearly, for example when discussing the impact of different religions on Welsh life. A majority of pupils have a wide subject-specific and general vocabulary. A few are very articulate. They speak with confidence and use sophisticated language to express their ideas. A few pupils are reluctant to answer questions and offer only short, underdeveloped verbal responses.

Many pupils have secure reading skills and can read aloud with confidence and suitable expression. They use strategies such as skimming and scanning texts to locate relevant information well. A minority are developing suitably their ability to synthesise information and make inferences from texts. A few pupils struggle to read basic texts.

In the majority of cases, pupils convey their ideas suitably through extended pieces of writing. They write with a suitable level of accuracy and have a sound understanding of how to structure their work. They write imaginatively and use figurative devices well, for example when creating the diary of a fairy tale villain. These pupils adapt their writing style appropriately for different purposes and audiences. A minority of pupils struggle to communicate their ideas coherently when writing and make too many basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. In general, pupils do not produce enough extended writing in subjects across the curriculum.

Many pupils have suitable numeracy skills and can add, subtract, multiply and divide competently. They use a calculator well to make more complex calculations. A majority of pupils demonstrate a suitable understanding of geometry, for example when identifying the characteristics of a prism and calculating its volume. Many can plot line graphs accurately and a majority can make appropriate scales for their axes and draw lines of best fit to show patterns in data. They use these skills well in subjects such as geography and science. A minority of pupils find it difficult to create their own scales or plot data points accurately.

Most pupils have a competent grasp of how to use the basic functions of word processing and presentation software. They understand how to carry out basic searches for key terms on the internet. However, they do not develop their ability to use the more advanced functions of various software packages in subjects across the curriculum.

In general, pupils develop their creativity well, for example when producing children's games and skateboard ramps in design technology. They can describe the reasons for their creative choices and how they developed their designs through experimentation. A few are developing their performing skills well, for example when learning how to play 'Hedwig's theme' in their music lessons.

A majority of pupils are making appropriate progress in their ability to think independently. For example, in their science lessons they devise their own investigations and make suitable hypotheses and understand how to categorise different types of variable. However, in a minority of cases, pupils are over-reliant on support from their teachers and reluctant to think for themselves.

In general, pupils develop their physical skills well. For example, they develop their fine motor skills well in technology as they measure, saw, sand or make pasta from scratch. In their physical education lessons, many make good progress in their technical and control skills when dribbling and passing a football.

Overall, pupils are making suitable progress in their ability to communicate in Welsh. However, they struggle with pronunciation and are over-reliant on structure patterns given to them by their teachers.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Many pupils are polite and show respect to adults, visitors and each other. In many instances they apply themselves in lessons, work purposefully and behave well. These pupils listen respectfully to explanations and instructions given by teachers and to the contributions of others.

Many pupils are enthusiastic learners. They sustain concentration and respond to feedback from their teachers positively. However, a few are passive in lessons and show little interest in their work. A few are too easily distracted and speak with each other while the teacher is presenting. In a few instances, internal truancy and poor punctuality impact negatively on pupils' learning.

Many pupils feel safe in the school and say that staff deal well with any incidents of bullying. They feel respected and well supported by staff with relationships between pupils and staff inside and outside of lessons a strong feature. However, there are a few incidences of poor behaviour in corridors, mainly during breaks, lunchtimes and lesson changeovers. A few pupils feel that the school does not deal well enough with incidences of bullying.

There are high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly football, rugby, fitness, netball, and dance. In general, pupils are developing a suitable understanding of the importance of physical activity and healthy eating and drinking.

The majority of pupils feel that they are listened to in school. The school council is active and has, for example, helped the school improve recycling and made beneficial suggestions to extend healthy menu choices in the school canteen. A minority of Year 11 pupils develop their social skills by acting as mentors to younger pupils in 'wellbeing gym' lessons and reading sessions.

Attendance in the school is a concern. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school is particularly high and impacts upon the progress that these pupils can make.

Teaching and learning experiences

Nearly all teachers have good subject knowledge. In many lessons, they create a calm and purposeful learning environment. They establish routines that ensure pupils arrive and settle quickly, for example through useful activities to reinforce previous learning. These teachers manage any lateness or off-task behaviour sensitively to avoid affecting the learning of others negatively.

In the majority of cases, teachers' planning ensures that pupils make strong progress. In these lessons, teachers use a range of approaches to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding progressively. They make clear the quality of work that pupils should aim for and have high expectations of what they can achieve. These teachers focus carefully on developing pupils' subject vocabulary and use questions skilfully to deepen pupils' thinking and encourage them to elaborate on their responses. They manage discussions well to explore ideas and concepts. In these lessons, the pace of learning matches pupils' needs well and teachers provide valuable targeted support where needed. In a few instances, teachers use humour and highly engaging activities to enthuse pupils, or offer authentic contexts for learning and make helpful links to other curriculum areas to reinforce pupils' understanding. Overall, teaching assistants support pupils' learning well.

In a few lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. They present for too long or over-scaffold tasks, which limits pupils' independent learning. In these cases, teachers do not plan well enough and often give pupils undemanding tasks that keep them busy rather than support progress in their learning. The pace of learning does not match pupils' learning needs. In a few instances, teachers do not adequately deal with pupils' lack of engagement or off-task behaviour.

Many teachers offer pupils useful verbal feedback. They offer them useful written guidance on how they can improve the quality of their work and useful opportunities to improve their work. In a minority of cases, feedback is too vague or does not help pupils to improve their understanding or responses well enough.

Reports to parents identify suitably pupils' current performance against targets and give due attention to attendance, behaviour, and their child's approach to learning. However, advice on how pupils can make progress is often too generic.

The school provides a curriculum which meets the needs of most pupils appropriately. It has a clear vision for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, captured by the motto 'flourish in life through learning'. Leaders are in the early stages of planning with their cluster primary schools to design a curriculum that meets pupils' needs, and interests and develop their aspirations. The school is developing out of class learning experiences for pupils suitably, for example an 'animal encounters' day.

The curriculum offer at Key Stage 4 meets the needs of most pupils suitably. The school is in the early stages of developing a curriculum offer with the local college to provide appropriate vocational qualification pathways for these pupils.

The school has begun to collaborate well with a range of partners, including further education providers and local employers, to ensure that pupils are well-informed and supported when making post-16 choices. Careers lessons have recently been integrated into the curriculum, providing helpful advice and guidance on future careers and pathways. This focuses helpfully on CV writing, interview preparation, post-16 choices and exam preparation. This is beginning to have a positive impact on older pupils' aspirations and understanding of career opportunities.

Support and intervention for pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills is beneficial and well established. However, planning for the progression of pupils' literacy skills across the school is at an early stage of development. Although many teachers offer suitable opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy and digital skills, there is no strategic planning to ensure the progressive development of these skills across subjects.

The school has a suitable curriculum offer for developing pupils' grasp of the Welsh language. However, opportunities to develop bilingualism are limited. The school's provision for pupils to learn about the history, experience and contributions of a diverse society within a local context, Wales and the wider world is underdeveloped.

The school has recently introduced weekly health and well-being lessons that focus appropriately on the importance of physical exercise and healthy eating and drinking. However, there are limited opportunities for all pupils to learn about and understand important issues appropriate to their age, such as substance misuse, sexual health and the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours on health and well-being.

The school has a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, which support pupils' learning, well-being, and creative skills appropriately. This includes a variety of sports and cultural experiences such as 'Debatemate', 'Scribblers', song writing and music technology.

Care, support and guidance

Eastern High is a caring and inclusive community that supports the personal development of its pupils well. Positive and respectful working relationships between staff and pupils are a notable feature. Support for pupils' emotional, social, physical, and mental health is extensive and tailored to meet the needs of pupils.

The school's 'Culture for learning' has a positive impact on behaviour and engagement in lessons. The school's approach ensures that pupils understand the effect of their actions on themselves and others. This has had a positive influence on the behaviour of many pupils. However, there are inconsistencies in the opportunities that pupils receive to explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters in the 'family learning' sessions with their tutors.

Vulnerable pupils have valuable opportunities to explore their thoughts and feelings in the 'Beewell' nurture provision and 'Wellbeing Gym' lessons. The Support Centre

provides well for those with high level needs. The school's supportive ethos helps these pupils reintegrate into mainstream lessons and contributes effectively to their personal and social development.

The school collaborates effectively with a wide variety of external partners that provide tailored support to meet the varied needs of vulnerable pupils. For example, interventions by local sports clubs have improved pupils' confidence as well as their behaviour and engagement in school and the community.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) and supporting team know these pupils well. Alongside the Eastern Personalised Learning Centre (EPLC) provision, they provide pupils, and their parents or carers, with high quality support.

The progress of all pupils that access interventions is closely monitored in order to ensure that they are acquiring the confidence and skills required to access mainstream provision. The ALNCO involves pupils, parents and relevant agencies beneficially in the statutory planning and review process. Pupils' individual development plans, personal learning plans and 'pupil passports' are comprehensive and useful documents. They describe pupils' aspirations and needs particularly well and include helpful strategies to support them. These are enhanced by a weekly information leaflet that includes 'top teaching tips' for specific pupils. These updates help continually to raise the profile of how staff can support pupils with additional learning, behavioural or well-being needs. Pupils with statements have a separate careers adviser and the ALN team liaise with families to support their child's next step, for example by carrying out college visits or providing 'travel training'.

Recently, the school has worked with its partner primary schools to review its 'the 5-stage approach' for promoting and improving attendance. House Managers and the Family Liaison Officer work closely with families to support students who are persistently absent. These strategies are beginning to have an impact on this group of pupils. However, the school's processes for dealing with internal truancy and poor punctuality and attendance are not effective enough.

The school's arrangements for dealing with poor behaviour and any incidents of bullying are clear. Staff keep detailed records and utilise, external partners, and restorative approaches well to support pupils involved. However, the school's arrangements for securing good behaviour are not always implemented consistently enough by staff.

The school's 'Culture of Success' works with the 'Culture for Learning' and focuses appropriately on rewarding pupils for positive behaviour and attitudes towards learning. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' engagement.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to influence decision-making. For example, parents and pupils were consulted regarding the development of the 'Culture for Learning' policy. Pupils also play an important part in subject self-evaluation, providing feedback that informs further developments involving teaching. The school council feel that they have a voice, but their impact is limited. Overall, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

Safeguarding children and prioritising their well-being are integral to the operation of the school. Leaders and staff are clear on safeguarding processes and can discuss how they contribute positively to a wider safeguarding culture. As a result, many pupils feel safe in school.

The Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Officer provide regular and purposeful training for staff. The safeguarding team monitor recorded incidents carefully and decide on the necessary next steps. Assemblies provide pupils with useful information on the support available to them. Discrete health and well-being and e-safety lessons are beginning to have an impact on the pupils' understanding of how they can help keep themselves safe.

Leadership and management

Since his appointment in September 2021, the headteacher has provided calm and assured leadership, managing change effectively and sensitively. He has a clear vision for every pupil to 'flourish in life through learning' and achieve their personal best. This is communicated regularly to staff, pupils and parents and permeates the school's work.

The headteacher has revised and restructured the senior leadership team to drive improvements in key areas. This structure provides a helpful balance between supporting pupils' academic progress and their well-being. Leaders and staff are passionate about their work and promote the school's core values of 'grit, respect and understanding' effectively. This approach contributes positively to a strong ethos of teamwork in the school. Leaders strongly promote a positive safeguarding culture and have secured high levels of consistency in the quality of teaching. However, leadership is not having enough impact on attendance and internal truancy.

Leaders have responded effectively to a number of national priorities such as the ALN transformation programme and the development of Curriculum for Wales. They focus strongly on the need to improve the attainment and well-being of pupils eligible for free school meals or those from low-income households. This includes targeting individual pupils for additional learning and support, engaging productively with families and ensuring that these pupils are not disadvantaged by the cost of the school day. However, leadership has not had enough impact on ensuring the progressive development of pupils' skills across subjects nor in promoting the benefits of bilingualism.

Lines of accountability are clear and there are regular review meetings to monitor progress. They follow an agreed agenda which includes an update on actions from previous meetings. However, these meetings focus too heavily on operational matters and do not consider pupils' progress well enough.

The school has a clear, well-understood cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities. Most staff contribute purposefully to these and are committed to continuous improvement. Activities such as learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of performance data and the views of pupils help leaders identify strengths and areas for development in subject areas appropriately. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning closely enough.

Whole-school and departmental improvement priorities align well with the school's overall vision. Leaders monitor progress against suitable success criteria. However, strategic planning does not focus well enough on a few important areas, in particular the development of pupils' skills and personal and social education (PSE).

The governing body provides effective oversight of the school's work. Governors have a secure understanding of all aspects of the school's performance. They ensure that arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking are appropriate.

The headteacher, business manager and the finance committee of the governing body manage the school's finances well. They review spending carefully and plan responsibly. The school makes purposeful use of funding such as the Pupil Development Grant to support the well-being, achievement, and experiences of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. However, they do not evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies well enough.

The school has suitable processes in place for the performance management of staff. In discussion with their line manager, staff set targets from a menu of options that link directly to the school's improvement priorities and meet their professional development needs.

Staff benefit from a wide range of professional learning opportunities. These focus on relevant improvement priorities, such as curriculum design, culture for learning, supporting ALN pupils and revisiting the school's priorities for teaching and learning. Staff have opportunities to share practice in departments and have collaborated well internally when planning their schemes of work. These initiatives have contributed well to the school's curriculum planning and the quality of teaching.

The school is beginning to collaborate with other providers to enhance its professional learning offer and share practice, for example with their cluster primary schools. Middle leaders have worthwhile opportunities to take on additional responsibilities that provide an experience of a wide range of pastoral and curriculum leadership as part of succession planning.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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