



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

A report on

**Bassaleg School
Forge Lane
Bassaleg
NP10 8NF**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About Bassaleg School

Bassaleg School is a mixed 11-19 school to the north east of Newport. Currently, it has 1,749 pupils on roll with 405 in the sixth form. This is slightly lower than at the time of the last inspection, when there were 1,767 pupils in total including 502 in the sixth form.

Pupils come mainly from six partner primary schools. Around 6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is much lower than the national average of 16.4% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 2% live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. One point four per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs compared with 2.5% for Wales as a whole. Around 8% of pupils have a special educational need, which is much lower than the national average of 20.1%. Many pupils are from a White British background. A few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. A few pupils speak English as an additional language and a very few speak Welsh fluently.

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

The headteacher has been in post since September 2018. The leadership team is made up of two deputy headteachers, a director of business and three assistant headteachers. The school was last inspected in November 2014.

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

Bassaleg School is an inclusive school in which care support and guidance is central to its ethos.

The school's comprehensive provision to strengthen pupils' sense of community, promote respect for diversity, support them to become ethically informed citizens and to develop their leadership skills is a strong feature of its work. This has contributed successfully to a culture where equality and diversity are celebrated and where pupils demonstrate a secure sense of social awareness and responsibility.

Performance at key stage 4 generally compares well with that in similar schools. The school's performance in the sixth form has improved in recent years and overall pupils in the sixth form make sound progress.

The quality of teaching helps many pupils to develop their skills in a wide range of contexts well. In particular, pupils demonstrate strong literacy skills and express their ideas and views confidently and articulately in discussions and in writing.

Leadership at all levels have a shared commitment to the values of the school. Secure improvement processes are used effectively to enhance the quality of the school's work and outcomes for pupils.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve outcomes in key stage 4 in a few areas across the curriculum
- R2 Improve the attitudes to learning of a few pupils
- R3 Reduce the variation in teaching and assessment to ensure that pupils of all abilities make sufficient progress

What happens next

Bassaleg School will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work around involving vulnerable groups in student representation and its personal and social education and tutorial programme for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils recall prior learning well and apply this effectively to new situations. Overall, many pupils make strong progress in their learning. However, a few do not make as much progress as they should.

Many pupils listen attentively to their teachers and peers. They contribute confidently to class discussion, for example when considering the moral implications of the death penalty in religious education. The majority of pupils provide well-considered, reflective and articulate responses to teachers' questions or in discussion. This is a notable strength in the standards that they demonstrate.

Most pupils locate facts confidently in texts. Many use a range of reading strategies effectively to enhance their understanding. For example, in a few lessons a majority of pupils combine prior learning, contextual and language clues well to make sense of unfamiliar texts. Many infer meaning and interpret evidence effectively. A minority of pupils analyse reading material exceptionally well, making full reference to social, cultural and historical contexts, for example when analysing the concept of responsibility in Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'.

Many pupils write confidently at length. They structure their ideas coherently and use subject specific terminology effectively in their writing. Many show a secure understanding of the purpose of their writing across the curriculum, and use a range of techniques successfully to enhance the quality of their writing, for example when pupils write effectively to justify their opinions on the plausibility of weeping statues in religious education, or in history, when writing to convince a government to ban slavery. When given the opportunity, many pupils draft and redraft their work effectively to improve its quality. A few experiment imaginatively with a range of structures and language to make their writing highly compelling.

Many pupils have strong number skills. They pupils have a secure understanding of measurement. For example, in mathematics more able pupils use sine and cosine rules successfully to calculate missing angles and sides. Many pupils record data effectively. They handle data competently to reach reasoned conclusions, for example to explain the average reaction time when catching a falling ruler. When given the opportunity, many pupils are able to apply their number skills well to solve problems that are set in real life contexts.

In information technology lessons, many pupils develop a suitable range of ICT skills in meaningful contexts. For example, pupils handle and produce a movie database or plan and make a video on the dangers of viruses and hacking using film-making software. In general, pupils make suitable progress in the development of their ICT skills in a few areas across the curriculum. For example, in music, pupils develop their understanding of compatibility between different file types.

In general, pupils develop their creative skills well, for example in Art to enhance images and explore the commercial application of their work, refining their finished product through a series of technical processes.

Many pupils write simple paragraphs in Welsh accurately. A few pupils produce extended writing that is well crafted. Many pupils achieve a level 2 qualification in Welsh. Outside of Welsh lessons, pupils do not practise or develop their Welsh oracy skills well enough.

Over the last few years, performance in the level 2 indicator, including English and mathematics has improved steadily. In 2018, it compares very favourably to that of similar schools and is notably above expectations. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE or equivalent grades at A*-A has been consistently strong over the last two years and is above the average for similar schools. Although performance in the capped points score at key stage 4 has declined over the last four years, in 2018 it remains broadly in line with expectations.

The performance of boys and girls is generally in line with that of similar pupils in most indicators. However, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals in the level 2 indicator, including English and mathematics and the capped points score does not compare favourably with the same group of pupils in similar schools over the last three years.

Nearly all pupils continue in education, employment or training when they leave Year 11.

In general, most pupils make sound progress in lessons in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils achieving three A* or A grades and three A* to C has improved over the last two years, but is lower than that of similar schools in 2018. The average wider points score has declined over the last three years and remains slightly below that of similar schools.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They feel that the school deals well with any incidents that arise. Nearly all pupils arrive promptly to lessons and most are ready to learn. Nearly all treat their peers and adults with respect and courtesy around the school.

Many pupils display positive behaviour in lessons and have positive attitudes towards learning. They approach new tasks with enthusiasm. They show grit and determination when faced with challenge and persist when work becomes difficult. Many pupils are eager to learn and concentrate well on their learning. They support each other well and work productively in pairs and groups, such as when they discuss methods of promoting positive mental and physical wellbeing. However, in a few lessons, the low-level disruption of individuals hampers their learning and that of others. A few pupils are too passive in their learning and do not concentrate well enough on their work. Pupils in the sixth form are particularly well motivated and engaged in their learning.

Many pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online and most show confidence in their interactions with new people. They show high levels of care and respect for others. Most pupils develop well as ethically, informed citizens. For example, pupils' contributions to the global learning project and the 'Health and happiness at Bassaleg' project have resulted in an increased awareness of cultural differences and higher levels of tolerance and support for their peers.

A notable feature is the successful leadership skills demonstrated by pupils, including those with additional learning needs, across a wide range of roles. For example, the 'Queer and Straight Alliance group' has successfully influenced school policy to introduce gender neutral uniform and has played a significant role in developing an inclusive and tolerant environment. The mental health ambassadors play an important role throughout the school in securing positive mental wellbeing for a significant number of pupils. These ambassadors have a good understanding of how to support their peers and provide useful guidance. This helps many pupils to make informed choices about engaging in activities that will promote their mental wellbeing. The school council provides good levels of challenge to the leadership team and the governing body. It has been successful in improving the quality of school buildings, in particular the canteen, and in informing the school's behaviour for learning policy.

Most pupils understand how to make healthy choices and take regular exercise, including from a wide range of fitness opportunities. Many pupils participate regularly in other extra-curricular activities such as musical ensembles and debating clubs.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

In many lessons, teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils make secure progress in their knowledge and skills. In these lessons, teachers foster productive working relationships and establish clearly understood routines that create a positive environment for learning. They plan activities and use resources that are both interesting and suitably challenging. In these lessons, teachers give clear instructions and explanations. They ensure that there is an effective balance between activities led by the teacher and opportunities for pupils to work independently or in small groups to consolidate their learning. These teachers monitor pupil progress closely and provide them with supportive and regular verbal feedback. They question pupils effectively to assess their understanding. In a minority of instances, teachers use questioning techniques highly skilfully to probe and deepen understanding.

In a few cases, the quality of teaching is exceptional. In these lessons, teachers have an infectious passion for their subject and this motivates and inspires pupils. They use their expert subject knowledge to provide pupils with a series of well-planned activities that both develops pupils' skills and builds a deep understanding of the subject. In these lessons, teachers increase the level of challenge when pupils are ready to be challenged further and encourage pupils to think deeply.

In a few instances, there are shortcomings in teaching that lead to a slow pace of learning and limit pupils' engagement. This is often because teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently. In these lessons, there is too much inconsistency in how well teachers apply the school's behaviour for learning policy and a lack of clarity in their explanations and instructions. How well a few teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils is variable.

In many cases, teachers provide pupils with beneficial written feedback. In the best examples, teachers annotate pupils' work so that it clearly identifies what to improve and how. They ensure that pupils respond purposefully and then revisit the pupils' response to check their progress. However, in a few instances there is too much

inconsistency in how well teachers ensure that pupils make the desired improvements to the quality of their work.

The school has developed valuable links with their partner primary schools that ensure the key stage 3 curriculum builds successfully on pupils' prior learning. The school plans its curriculum skilfully to ensure it meets the needs of nearly all pupils. Pupils at key stage 4 and in the sixth form are able to choose from a comprehensive range of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular experiences, for example the debating, history, mathematics, gardening and sporting clubs. Cultural trips to local and international destinations, such as the trips to local landmarks as well as trips to Iceland and Berlin, enrich pupils' curriculum experiences well.

The school's planning for pupils' literacy development across subjects is strong. In particular, paired and group work is used skilfully to develop pupils' oracy skills. This has contributed very well to pupils' ability to discuss their ideas and speak articulately in lessons and around the school. The school has shared this practice successfully in its role as a curriculum pioneer school. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their numerical problem solving skills within mathematics lessons. The school's provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills outside of mathematics lessons is appropriate, although the level of challenge offered by a few tasks is too variable. A programme of effective interventions is in place to support pupils who have weak literacy and numeracy skills.

Literacy, numeracy and ICT co-ordinators provide valuable support for teachers through whole-school and small group professional learning activities, including one-to-one meetings with subject leaders. The school's provision for developing pupils' ICT skills is progressing well. It includes worthwhile tasks. For example, pupils create animations to explain the effects of sea erosion on a peninsula in geography.

The school develops pupils' appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture suitably through a range of activities such as learning the Welsh national anthem, the annual Eisteddfod, trips to Glan Llyn and Llangrannog, the study of Welsh artists and celebrating Santes Dwynwen day. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is very successful in securing a caring, supportive and inclusive ethos. There is a comprehensive range of provision to develop pupils as ethically informed citizens, their understanding of spiritual and moral issues, to support them with mental and physical health and develop a culture where equality and diversity are celebrated and embraced.

The school's tutor programme is an outstanding aspect of its work. It covers an extensive range of topics around mental health, relationship and sexuality education, building resilience, awareness around young carers and global citizenship. The programme is based closely on first hand evidence, current research and the views of pupils and staff. This provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to explore and develop their moral and social values. This provision is carefully integrated into the whole-school programme for personal, social and health education and is supported effectively by curriculum areas. This also includes valuable provision to

raise awareness of and embrace LGBT diversity, to understand a wide range of spiritual values in other beliefs and to discuss these matters in a safe and supportive environment within the school's enhanced 'religion, morals and philosophy' programme.

Pastoral transition arrangements between key stage 2 and key stage 3 are strong. The school works collaboratively with its partner primary schools to share its personal, social and health education in Year 6 to support their wellbeing and online safety. This ensures that pupils who transfer to the school settle in quickly and it provides continuity in support and guidance.

A notable feature of the school's work is the way in which it encourages pupils' active involvement in all aspects of school life and the wider community. There are extensive opportunities to develop pupils' wider skills, such as decision-making, through participation in groups such as the Eco Club and the sixth form 'Giving back to Bassaleg' programme. A particular strength is the focus on mental wellbeing. The school's pupil-led mental health council actively raises awareness and offers strong peer-to-peer support by trained pupils. In addition, the school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop a strong sense of social responsibility through raising significant amounts of money for local and national charities, such as Newport Mind and Shelter Cymru. The school tracks closely the involvement of vulnerable pupils and those with protected characteristics in its community activities and pupil groups. It uses this information effectively to actively encourage involvement of a diverse range of pupils to ensure that all pupil representative groups are reflective of the school population as a whole. The school is proactive in identifying and supporting young carers to build their own support network.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. It is successful in encouraging pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, dance and dodgeball contribute well to this aspect of the school's provision. A significant number of pupils benefit from participating in extensive opportunities to develop their musical talents, for example a Chamber Choir and big band. These groups are involved actively in the wider community and deliver concerts in a variety of settings, such as in Llandaff Cathedral in aid of Meningitis Now.

The school has strong systems to communicate with parents and carers who receive communication through a wide range of routes that they find easy to access. The school ensures that parents and carers are well informed of their child's academic progress and wellbeing. Staff involve them well when pupils are at risk of underachieving. The school makes effective use of 'meetings around the child' to support and develop pupils' progress.

The school's behaviour for learning policy provides clear and supportive mechanisms to reward and improve pupils' behaviour. This policy is generally well understood and has been successful in reducing exclusions and the number of reported behaviour incidents. The school deploys helpful strategies that enable pupils to reflect successfully on their behaviour and to learn to manage their emotions. In most instances, this enables pupils to integrate quickly back into lessons. In particular, staff, pupils and parents work collaboratively in the "behaviour breakfast" meetings to secure timely intervention.

The annual review process satisfies statutory requirements and individual development plans provide beneficial targets for all pupils with additional learning needs. They give subject teachers valuable advice on how to meet pupils' needs in their classrooms. The school supports vulnerable pupils well through a modified curriculum. The school supports successfully asylum seekers and pupils with English as an additional language to integrate into school life and make progress in their learning.

The school provides valuable information and guidance regarding options and careers to support pupils in making informed decisions. Close links with businesses enhance the provision in this area and have supported pupils in entering the world of work, including those at risk of disaffection.

The school has strong and effective tracking systems in place to monitor the progress, behaviour and wellbeing of individual pupils and groups of learners at all key stages, including those receiving alternative provision. It uses this information well to monitor pupil progress and to target additional support.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision for Bassaleg School based on developing a sense of community. Central to this vision is care, support and guidance to promote the wellbeing of pupils. She shares her vision successfully with staff, governors, pupils and parents. The senior leadership team support the headteacher well and share her sense of commitment to the values of the school. This has created a collaborative culture where staff work together beneficially towards a common purpose.

Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are delegated effectively and are understood clearly by all. Senior leaders hold middle leaders to account well. Lines of accountability are clear and leaders focus well on pupils' standards and progress in regular line management meetings. The school responds robustly to any instances of underperformance.

Most middle leaders have a clear understanding of their roles. Many use data well to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This has led to improvements in standards, particularly in core subjects, over the last few years. A few middle leaders have been less successful than others in maintaining high standards and improving teaching in their departments.

Most leaders evaluate the school's work through rigorous self-evaluation of teaching and learning. They use evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of books and canvassing pupils' views effectively to identify improvement priorities and provide staff with clear guidelines for improving teaching. This has contributed successfully, for example, to improved standards of writing and oracy across the school.

Priorities in departmental improvement planning mirror those of the whole-school well and help provide a consistent focus on improving teaching and learning. Leaders make beneficial use of pupil progress data to implement effective interventions to improve performance.

Many departments have well established procedures for tracking and monitoring progress towards improvement targets. This enables leaders to implement effective strategies to address any areas requiring development. In a few instances, leaders do not monitor progress against improvement priorities rigorously enough.

Performance management arrangements provide all staff with useful opportunities to discuss their development needs. Objectives are personalised, suitably ambitious and link well with both professional standards and the school's priorities.

The school has successfully created a strong culture and ethos of professional learning. There is a valuable ongoing programme of professional learning activities, and good practice is shared widely. Staff engage well in the programme and most take responsibility effectively for leading their own development. The school provides focused workshops to develop leadership skills, and staff provide valuable training on specific aspects of teaching and learning, such as provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.

The school collaborates effectively with other local schools and schools outside the region to further develop leaders and share good practice. This includes its work towards developing an innovative curriculum and improving provision for more able pupils.

Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. They challenge the school well in their various committees and monitor progress against the school improvement plan closely.

Leaders manage the school resources carefully. The headteacher, business manager and governing body monitor expenditure carefully to ensure that there is a clear link between spending and the school's strategic priorities. The school uses the available accommodation and resources successfully to create a general positive learning environment. Beneficial use is made of grant funding such as the pupil development grant that has led to improved attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2019: 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: 16/07/2019