

May 2024

Dear Lucy,

**Estyn interim visit**

Thank you for your support to pilot our interim visit to the school on 30 April and 1 May 2024. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you, your staff and pupils and hear more about the improvement work that the school has carried out since the core inspection in November 2016.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to:

* speak with senior leaders, subject leaders and teaching staff about the school’s work to develop teaching and the provision for pupils’ skills
* look at work by pupils in Year 9, and talk with these pupils about their learning and the progress they are making
* visit a range of lessons in several different subject areas
* undertake joint lesson observation, learning walk and book scrutiny activities with senior and middle leaders

Through our visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils’ books, we were able to see that the school is using a range of beneficial strategies to develop the quality of teaching. Staff enjoy a variety of professional learning activities, which are focused on strengthening specific aspects of classroom practice, such as questioning and developing pupils’ independence in learning. We recognise that the school is continuing to work on these areas, supporting staff to develop lessons that develop pupils’ thinking and help them to take more responsibility for their own learning. The school has recently revised its approach to written feedback. Whilst the team did see examples of this helping pupils to make improvements to their work, we would agree with the school’s view that this is at an early stage of development.

We found it helpful to discuss with you the school’s approach to developing pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. We know that the school has prioritised the establishment of a reading culture, and we were able to see some of the strategies to support this in action during our visit. Although much of the work to strengthen skills provision across the school is very recent, making it too soon to see a sustained impact, leaders were able to give us a clear picture of the school’s strategic direction with this aspect of its work.

In our discussions with senior and middle leaders, we heard how the school is strengthening its processes to evaluate its provision and plan for improvement. In particular, leaders are working to ensure that they focus as closely as possible on the impact of teaching on the progress that pupils make. Middle leaders appreciate the support they are being given to develop this aspect of their role, and value the clarity that has been provided by the refinements that have been made to the school’s approach.

We wish you well with your future developments. We think it would be helpful for the school to consider:

* How effectively and consistently does teaching encourage pupils to think independently and take responsibility for their own learning?
* What impact are revised approaches to written feedback having on pupils’ ability to reflect on and improve their work?
* Are literacy and numeracy-focused activities across the curriculum challenging pupils to progressively develop their skills?
* To what extent are refined approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning helping leaders to continually strengthen the impact of their provision on pupil outcomes?

Thank you again for all your help to plan and arrange our visit.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Evans

**Assistant Director**