

Overview of Progress 2025-26

Highlights

At Bassaleg School our **culture of safeguarding** is learner focused and learner led; we have successfully interwoven robust operational safety with a deeply embedded culture of mutual respect and learner agency. Highly visible staff presence, secure site management, and regularly practiced safety drills provide a reassuringly secure physical environment. This is supported by a whole-school 'Kindness Charter,' led by learners from our Believing & Belonging council and co-constructed with all learners. The 'Listening To Young People' (L2YP) agenda provides extensive leadership opportunities across the school and these initiatives empower learners, including those from vulnerable groups, to actively shape school policy and lead peer-support initiatives, such as mental health & LGBTQ+ assemblies and behaviour, kindness, No To Racism & LGBTQ+ charters. By giving learners a genuine voice and distinct autonomy, the school has fostered an inclusive, nurturing environment. This ensures that learners remain physically secure and feel safe, listened to, respected and valued within their school community.

The **whole-school approach to pedagogy** at Bassaleg School is rooted in our four 'Pillars of Pedagogy'. This research-informed vision, shared by all staff, underpins the school's professional learning model and is also driven by regularly updated and co-constructed 'Pillar Pages', which provide practical ideas and support for staff. As a result, teachers plan and deliver lessons which:

- immerse pupils in high quality, live modelling of skills and subject knowledge;
- provide appropriate and ambitious opportunities for challenge;
- adapt the pace of learning to respond to pupils' progress through varied and engaging activities;
- are underpinned by metacognitive approaches to learning.

The development of our 'Pillars of Pedagogy' has enabled a shared understanding of what high quality teaching and learning looks like and allows professional learning to be directed at very specific aspects for improvement. Consequently, in most lessons, common strengths in teaching lead to excellent progress in pupils' skills.

The 'Pillars of Pedagogy' has especially enabled teachers to standardise approaches to enhancing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, the use of Voice 21 talk structures to accelerate progress in the quality of pupils' talk has resulted in most pupils demonstrating confidence, detail and ambition when contributing verbally to lessons. In addition, pupils are able to listen actively and build on each others' ideas. Pupils are also supported to apply higher order reading skills in order to access meaning across a range of challenging and stimulating multi-modal texts. In the most effective lessons, pupils demonstrate these skills at a high level. This approach has contributed to high levels of engagement in lessons and positive attitudes to learning from nearly all pupils.

The school has developed a **highly responsive, progressive wellbeing curriculum, 'Believing and Belonging'**, which integrates personal, social, and relationship education with statutory provision. Utilizing a carefully mapped spiral design across Years 7 to 11, the curriculum continually revisits core themes, including relationships, health, and wider-world issues, tailoring content to the specific maturity & needs of each year group. Teachers use active learning strategies to assess understanding and adapt lessons in real time to the current, real-world issues pupils face. By putting learners at the heart of curriculum design, the school has successfully established classrooms as trusted, safe spaces. Consequently, pupils see clear purpose in their studies, demonstrate high motivation to explore complex topics, and feel exceptionally well-supported in their personal development.

The school has a **'ground up' approach to quality assurance** which starts with continuous assessment strategies in the classroom. A series of refinements have created a model where the information from quality assurance is shared at every level, supported by regular book looks, pedagogy walks and listening to young people sessions, and responded to in a way that means any concerns in pedagogy or wellbeing support are immediately addressed via termly target setting. The process is fully inclusive: staff have undergone a series of professional learning sessions to support them in evaluating standards and progress and findings are compiled on a whole school level and shared with all staff on a half termly basis. As a result of this process teachers and learners are highly aware of what the most urgent needs are in terms of learner progress and skill development and work collaboratively to ensure sustained progress over time.

Our most recent **interim Estyn inspection in February 2026** focused on:

- what steps the school is taking to strengthen its self-evaluation and improvement planning process and
- how the school has strengthened its approaches to improving teaching

The Estyn outcomes letter summarises their findings and celebrates considerable strengths in both areas. They recognised the extensive work that has gone in to develop systems that ‘place teaching and learning at the centre’; they praised our evidence-informed approach to pedagogy rooted in our ‘pillars of pedagogy that underpin our professional learning programme’ and our quality assurance ‘live cycle of self-evaluation that is rooted in determining the impact of all aspects of the school’s work’. To read more please click on the link: [pdf Interim visit letter Bassaleg School 2026.pdf](#)

Summary of progress against SIP priorities 2024-2025

Target	Impact on Learner Progress
1. Improve standards of pupils’ basic skills and technical accuracy in their written work	This is an improving area, but it remains inconsistent. Most learners can produce coherent writing through accurate simple, compound and complex sentences, and use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately: there has been improvement where SPaG has been explicitly targeted. However, proofreading, redrafting and self/peer assessment are not yet embedded consistently enough across the school. Many pupils demonstrate confidence in engaging with complex, extended writing. They are not only completing challenging tasks but are also able to refine and improve their work systematically, demonstrating a clearer understanding of how to progress. Next Steps • Conduct whole staff professional learning on effective methods of explicitly teaching pupils how to proof read and monitor their work for technical accuracy. Monitor whether increased staff understanding increases the application of explicit proof reading in lessons. • Ensure that technical accuracy remains a clear focus for 2026 2027 SIP
2. Develop and promote a shared understanding of progression towards our Point B learner to	DIRT is becoming widely embedded across classroom practice. In the best cases, DIRT is linked to exam criteria, enabling pupils to act on feedback independently, break down success criteria, and systematically improve their work (particularly evident in Year 9 extended writing). However there is inconsistency, DIRT can still be

complement progression towards MEGs.	tokenistic or brief, sometimes lacking sufficient depth, time, or structure to make a meaningful impact. Effective metacognitive reflection is evident in around half of observed lessons and books. When embedded, pupils can articulate how feedback helped them improve. However many pupils still reflect on learning at a surface level, considering what they did rather than how they learned: the strategy, efficacy, or next steps. A few earners still rely heavily on teacher scaffolding rather than taking ownership of their learning process. There are consistently high expectations for learners in most lessons: in strong lessons, questioning is deeply challenging, differentiated, and pushes pupils past superficial answers. Questioning is not yet consistently planned across all lessons to ensure all pupils engage with higher-order thinking independently. When effective, starters successfully drive retrieval, literacy, numeracy, and immediate engagement in appropriate levels of challenge. In a minority of lessons, weak lesson starts reduce overall learning time and fail to establish sufficient challenge from the outset. Next Steps • Create and conduct staff professional learning on key aspects emerging from Quality Assurance: starter activities to employ challenge and well planned questioning. Monitor the impact of these through maintaining focus on these key aspects of pedagogy for the full academic year 2026 2027 • Review Quality Assurance systems to allow Directors of Standards and individual staff to direct feedback specifically to classrooms where it is most pertinent and increase staff level accountability for improvement in key aspects of pupils' learner effectiveness.
3. Ensure there is a purposeful and embedded culture of reading across all curriculum areas	Where it is taught explicitly most pupils demonstrate sophisticated higher-order reading skills—such as selecting, analysing and color-coding/summarizing text to improve depth. Most pupils successfully use diverse text types (articles, data, graphics, infographics) to enhance subject knowledge and handle NEA secondary data.

	A few subject areas (LLC) explicitly teach 'learning to read' so that most learners are able to better understand grammatical rules and the construction of texts. This impacts positively on accuracy in writing and their application of higher order reading skills to other texts. Reading remains a barrier for a small group of pupils who are reluctant to engage independently. Targeted strategies (chunking texts, simple comprehension starter questions) are being developed to prevent opt-outs and reduce over-reliance on teacher guidance. The DEAR initiative has seen strong engagement in Year 7 English, alongside genuine enthusiasm for reading plays aloud. Next Steps • Redevelop school library: through this English plans to move away from using DEAR as a lesson starter, shifting toward dedicated, bespoke reading lessons next academic year to deepen reading culture. • Ensure that technical reading remains a clear focus for 2026 2027 SIP
4. Continue to reduce the gap in the attendance of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (8%) compared to those pupils who are not eligible.	Reducing the attendance gap between non eFSM and eFSM learners is the focus for this target in order that improved attendance would lead to improved attainment. Whilst the attendance gap has not decreased we can report that the attainment gap has significantly reduced. Whole School Attendance: • Whole school total 92.1%; FSM 79.4%. Differential grows through 3 terms from 9.8%, to 10.7% to 13.1% in summer term. Year 11 2025-26 Attendance: • 16% Year 11 FSM classed as PA (<90%), 71% less than last year's final figure (87%). • Pleasingly, 76% of Year 11 FSM have improved their attendance Year 10 total to May Year 11 total. Evidence of Year 11 FSM intervention focus working. • 60% Year 11 FSM improved attendance from Spring to critical Summer term.

Our 'Magnetic School' whole school approach has impacted on the outcomes for eFSM learners: Capped 9 performance for eFSM is 318.86 compared with overall capped 9 performance of 405.02, (a gap of **-86.16** compared with a negative residual 2024-2025 of **-163.42**, demonstrating significant improvement in closing the attainment gap between non eFSM and eFSM learners.

	2026	2025
Overall	318.86 (+80.28)	238.58
Top Third	492.45 (+77.25)	415.2
Middle Third	422.45 (+194.95)	227.5
Bottom Third	315.31 (+286.43)	28.88

- FSM Overall Summer results are up 65 points compared to final outcomes last year. Over a grade higher in each capped 9 subject (1.2).
- 88% of FSM pupils in bottom third. Here results are up 155 points on last year; almost 3 grades higher in each capped 9 subject (2.9).
- FSM / non-FSM comparisons continue increasingly positive (and marginally more so as move from Year 11 to 7).
 - Year 10; FSM 350, Non-FSM 404 (-54 residual)
 - Year 9; FSM 347, Non-FSM 403 (-56 residual)
 - Year 8; FSM 366 , Non-FSM 414 (-48 residual)
 - Year 7; FSM 369, Non-FSM 415 (-46 residual)

Next Steps

- Continue to develop our 'Magnetic School' approach to support better attendance and engagement for eFSM learners.
- Continue to target eFSM learners through our learning coach provision
- Ensure that eFSM learners remain a clear priority for 2026-2027 SIP

5. Develop our whole school bilingualism culture so that learners, staff and our wider community can contribute to and engage with the Welsh language and Welsh culture at every opportunity	Significant progress has been made against all aspects of this target, in one academic year, however building a 'culture' takes time and further work to embed change is required over the coming years. Progress to date: • Increased visibility and use of Welsh across the school (across pupils and staff) strengthening aims of the Curriculum for Wales and 1million Welsh speakers target. • Most staff are reporting that they are more confident with use of Welsh, strengthening the normalcy of the use of the Welsh language. • Meaningful and useful opportunities for learners to use Welsh in everyday school life in readiness for life outside of school. • Work has begun to promote whole-school and community engagement with Welsh language and culture, normalising its use rather than a novelty school subject only. Next Steps • Continue to work towards achieving Bronze Award with Siarter Iaith & Criw Cymraeg. • Continue to support staff with high quality professional learning to develop their Welsh language skills. • Ensure our whole school bilingualism agenda remains a clear focus for 2026 2027 SIP
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SIP Priorities 2026-2027

Priorities
1. Our learners are able and ready for challenge; push every pupil in your class to feel 'comfortable with uncomfortable' in their learning experience. a. Striving for accuracy - Engage all pupils in continuous and purposeful review and reflection of their written work to ensure that it is both accurate and ambitious.

- b. Questioning** - Routinely plan for and pose higher-order questions to all learners and probe their understanding through a range of secondary questions which ensure that they are thinking more deeply.
- c. Starters** - Begin every lesson with purpose and ambition to ensure that pupils' learning experiences are maximised from the moment they arrive.

2. To continue to reduce variation in the development of reading skills across the curriculum through explicit focus on how we ensure our pupils are:

- learning to read;
- reading to learn;
- reading for pleasure

in order to enhance our whole-school culture of reading.

3. Raise aspirations of those challenged by poverty through prioritising a culture of inclusivity within our 'magnetic classroom' agenda

- a. Continue to **reduce the gap in the attendance** of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (8%) compared to those pupils who are not eligible.
- b. Ensure that all **eFSM learners secure at least their minimum expected grade**: for year 11 outcomes this represents a capped 9 score of 344 points which is a 59 point difference compared to non-eFSM learners.
- c. Support eFSM learners in aspiring to be the **best version of themselves**.

4. To continue to develop & embed our whole school bilingualism culture so that learners, staff and our wider community can contribute to and engage with the Welsh language and Welsh culture at every opportunity

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
DEAR	Drop everything and read
DIRT	Directed reflection time
eFSM	Eligible for Free school meals

LLC	Language, Literacy and Communication
L2YP	Listening to Young People
MEGs	Minimum expected grades
NEA	Non exam assessment (coursework)
SPaG	Spelling, punctuation & grammar
SIP	School improvement plan