



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

## **Report following monitoring**

**Level of follow-up: Significant Improvement**

**Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed  
Commercial Street  
Bargoed  
Caerphilly  
CF81 8JG**

**Date of visit: June 2022**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## Outcome of visit

Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools that are in need of significant improvement.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **R1. Ensure that leaders, including the governors, act more effectively in setting a strategic direction for the school and challenging its performance**

Since the core inspection, the school has worked with the local authority to appoint a permanent executive headteacher, in addition to an acting executive deputy headteacher, to lead this school and another one nearby. The school has also recently appointed a permanent deputy headteacher, who will assume the role when the acting deputy headteacher leaves the school at the end of this term. This ensures that the school has a complement of permanent leaders, teachers and assistants that corresponds appropriately to the number of pupils who currently attend the school.

The headteacher sets a clear strategic direction for improvement and shares a purposeful vision, which supports the school's work effectively. Since being appointed soon after the core inspection, the headteacher has responded successfully to challenges relating to staffing and governance, in addition to leading the school through the difficult period during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has strengthened the relationship between the school and parents and carers, in addition to establishing a sense of team among the staff. This contributes well to the positive ethos and co-operation that now exist within the school.

The staff now have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities and contribute well towards improving important aspects of provision and pupils' standards and wellbeing. Leaders have also established a positive attitude and clear arrangements for ensuring continuous improvements, for example by establishing purposeful performance management and professional development arrangements for all staff. Despite the effect of the pandemic on the school's work over the last two years, the senior management team, alongside staff and governors, have worked together effectively to make good progress against the priorities.

Leaders know the school well and work successfully with other agencies, including other schools, the local authority and the regional consortium. They have undertaken a range of purposeful training to support progress against the targets in the post-inspection action plan. Leaders and members of the governing body have an effective working relationship. Governors now show a sound understanding of the school's performance and its development needs. Members have a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience that support their work effectively. For example, they work with the school's leaders and staff to evaluate and improve provision for

pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and appoint new members of staff. As a result, they use their knowledge and understanding more effectively to challenge the school on its performance and to support leaders and staff purposefully.

## **R2. Improve self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes**

Leaders have refined and improved self-evaluation procedures since the core inspection. Despite the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the school's monitoring arrangements, they have succeeded in measuring progress against targets in the post-inspection plan effectively. This includes seeking the views of staff, governors, pupils and parents. Leaders and teachers have undertaken a wide range of first-hand monitoring activities to evaluate provision and pupils' standards and wellbeing, for example by observing learning sessions and scrutinising books. As a result, they have a sound understanding of strengths and areas for improvement, which enables them to adapt provision and improvement plans where necessary. Leaders also respond promptly to the findings of questionnaires to improve provision, for example by providing training to develop the knowledge and skills of teaching and assistants to support pupils with ALN. Leaders use evaluations by external agencies effectively to refine provision, for example by improving on safeguarding arrangements in addition to ALN provision following reviews by the local authority.

Members of the governing body contribute appropriately to evaluating provision and standards, although the pandemic has limited their visits to the school. Reports from the headteacher and leaders to governors are evaluative and provide a fair and accurate reflection of the school's life and work. They also provide governors with useful presentations and feedback, which includes reporting on progress against the priorities in the post-inspection action plan. As a result, governors have sound knowledge of strengths and areas for improvement, in addition to progress against the priorities in the post-inspection action plan.

## **R3. Establish manageable progress-tracking procedures and ensure that teachers use them efficiently to extend learning**

The school has established robust procedures for tracking pupils' progress. Leaders and teachers use a wide range of assessments and observations effectively to measure pupils' progress and achievement. They have begun to use the information that is gathered to identify gaps in pupils' learning appropriately. This means that they plan suitable opportunities to support all pupils, including those who receive different interventions and support. As a result, teachers' short-term plans show a range of activities and learning experiences that correspond well to pupils' needs.

Staff standardise pupils' work regularly with each other, which has a positive effect on their confidence to discuss pupils' standards of achievement. This means that the information that is recorded to track pupils' progress is more accurate and useful. Staff have now begun to work effectively with other schools to standardise and moderate pupils' work jointly. As a result, teachers' understanding of pupils' progress and achievement is developing well. They have also shared this good practice with another school.

Leaders have organised purposeful training for staff to improve their understanding of assessment for learning procedures further. For example, by considering effective

questioning strategies and the best use of self-assessment and peer assessment, staff are more confident in determining pupils' understanding during activities and adapting their input in response to this.

#### **R4. Ensure that provision for pupils with special educational needs meets their needs**

The school has effective procedures to support pupils with ALN. The additional learning needs co-ordinator has worked diligently with all members of staff to ensure understanding and consistency in the school's provision for ALN pupils. Staff understand their role well in identifying pupils who need additional support either educationally or emotionally at an early stage. All members of staff have received relevant training on ALN arrangements, including how to implement interventions more effectively. They discuss pupils who are causing concern or underperforming regularly in staff meetings. As a result, the school now operates an effective graduated response to respond fully to pupils' needs, and those pupils in most need receive the necessary support promptly. This ensures that the school meets the needs of these pupils effectively.

The co-ordinator monitors and analyses the findings of interventions regularly and adapts input or organises additional training for staff, as appropriate. For example, leaders have organised for a member of staff to be trained as an emotional literacy support assistant to provide support tailored especially for vulnerable pupils. The school now communicates clearly and consistently with parents and carers about their children's needs and progress. They are included regularly in the process of planning and monitoring their children's development. The school is preparing purposefully for the arrival of the additional learning needs transformation programme by ensuring that the appropriate documentation is prepared correctly for specific pupils.

#### **R5. Improve pupils' standards of literacy**

The school has worked successfully with a nearby school, the local authority and the regional consortium to improve pupils' literacy skills. The acting executive deputy headteacher and teachers have established robust arrangements to improve provision and pupils' skills. This includes organising relevant training and support to develop pupils' oral, reading and writing skills, in addition to undertaking activities to monitor provision and standards regularly. As a result, they act successfully on whole-school strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills.

As only a few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes, leaders and teachers have responded promptly to pupils' linguistic needs during the pandemic. They have introduced a Welsh oracy scheme that has been adapted to meet pupils' specific needs. The scheme provides a structured language programme, which ensures that pupils develop progressively across the school. Staff conduct beneficial sessions to reinforce the Welsh language, for example by implementing daily language drilling and singing sessions in the foundation phase. Consistency in provision across the school has a positive effect on the standard of pupils' oracy and many are more confident when discussing their work, suggesting ideas and contributing to group or class discussions.

In the foundation phase, staff work together successfully to develop pupils' early reading skills. They provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop a sound understanding of letters and appropriate reading strategies. From Year 1 onwards, staff deliver a daily 'reading carousel' arrangement to ensure beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise and read for different purposes and a variety of audiences. They have a sound awareness of how to extend pupils' reading comprehension skills, for example by encouraging them to extend their responses and come to conclusions when discussing a newspaper article. Leaders' monitoring records and pupils' achievement show the early success of these arrangements.

The school now has purposeful plans in place to develop pupils' writing skills. Leaders and staff have worked together effectively to evaluate and improve opportunities for pupils to write in different genres. They have created a long-term plan that ensures that pupils learn about the features of different methods of writing and practise them regularly. Early in the foundation phase, pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their early writing and fine motor skills through a suitable range of practical learning and play experiences, for example by using tweezers to grasp different-coloured objects. By Year 2, pupils show a sound awareness of writing for different purposes, for example by writing a newspaper article about the adventures of Frans from Austria. Many use punctuation and short verb forms with increasing accuracy in their work. In key stage 2, teachers plan a series of lessons and learning experiences effectively that build on previous learning successfully. This contributes well to pupils' standards of writing. For example, pupils at the top of the school use a good range of adjectives, similes and metaphors to enrich their newspaper article about the aerial bombing of Swansea during the Second World War.

#### **R6. Ensure that planning and teaching provide appropriate challenge for pupils to achieve to the best of their ability and develop as independent learners**

Teachers now plan purposefully to ensure that learning experiences challenge pupils more effectively. They include the pupil's voice when planning new themes, which engages their interest well. Teachers' planning build on pupils' previous learning effectively. In the best practice, staff plan rich tasks that set an appropriate level of challenge for a wide range of abilities in the class. In the youngest classes, teachers are beginning to develop beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in the learning areas more suitably. For example, pupils use a QR code to access numeracy tasks to solve on electronic tablets. However, learning and play activities do not always challenge pupils effectively enough in these classes.

When teaching is at its most effective, sessions are lively and capture pupils' imagination well. Teachers share the objectives of the sessions clearly to ensure that pupils understand the requirements of the task and respond eagerly to challenges. Pupils understand the purpose of the success criteria and speak maturely at the end of their tasks about how successful they were. As a result, pupils work with increasing independence. All staff model correct spoken language effectively across the school.

Overall, teachers present activities with a suitable pace that engage the interest of many pupils throughout the session. They question pupils effectively to extend their vocabulary and understanding. Staff encourage pupils to work in pairs and groups

often in order to support and challenge each other. Overall, staff have high expectations and pupils respond well to the challenge, on the whole. This has led to an increase in the standard of pupils' work over time, and a majority complete work in line with their age and ability. For example, staff at the top of the school encourage pupils to consider and discuss the effect of a picture of interned prisoners during the Second World War on their five senses. This means that pupils are challenged to think deeply about the conditions in the camp and, as a result, write about it to a high standard. When teaching is not as effective, staff have a tendency to over-direct pupils and miss opportunities to extend their skills and understanding further.

Rigorous, regular and accurate monitoring processes by leaders ensure regular and accurate feedback for teachers on the standard of teaching. This means that staff continue to develop their planning and provision effectively to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to be challenged regularly and develop their independence.

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