



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

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Estyn review

**Ysgol Calon Cymru
College Road
Builth Wells
Powys
LD2 3BW**

Date of visit: September 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

Outcome of visit

Ysgol Calon Cymru is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is increasing the level of follow-up activity.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school following receipt of the action plan, to ensure that it is suitable and likely to bring about the required improvement. Inspectors will visit the school again, in a further 12 months' time, to monitor progress in addressing the recommendations.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve the quality of teaching.

Since the core inspection, the school has developed a whole-school approach to teaching through their 'lesson essentials'. This has helped to develop a shared understanding amongst staff of the school's expectations around teaching. More recently, 'marking essentials' have been developed and introduced with the aim of improving the quality of feedback. However, these developments have not had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching.

Most teachers nurture positive working relationships with pupils. They have effective classroom routines and manage behaviour well. Most are good language models and many have secure subject knowledge.

In the very few instances where teaching is very strong, teachers plan lessons skilfully to ensure that pupils make rapid progress. In these lessons, activities build well on each other and resources are carefully designed to support pupils' learning. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are very high and they understand well how to offer a level of challenge that enables pupils to achieve their potential.

Many teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, but expectations in terms of pupils' standards and progress are too variable. There is often a lack of clarity around what is meant by challenge in lessons, especially for more able pupils. In a majority of lessons, activities and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are broadly suitable. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations and

the level of challenge are too low. This results in the pace of pupils' learning being too slow. In these lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to ensure pupil progress. They tend to plan for activities that keep pupils busy rather than enabling them to make sufficient progress in their subject knowledge and skills. Shortcomings in these lessons also include providing activities that are too low level or overly scaffolded, giving too much or too little time to tasks and not exploring the work in sufficient depth.

Many teachers provide clear explanations and instructions, and a minority model and exemplify effectively. Where teaching assistants are in lessons, they provide useful and sensitive support to pupils. In a minority of cases, teachers plan lessons well to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and adapt their lessons sensibly in response to pupils' progress. In a majority of cases, teachers do not plan for or pick up on pupils' misconceptions or difficulties well enough and do not adapt their teaching suitably in response.

Most teachers circulate the class, offering helpful feedback to individual pupils and many question pupils suitably to check for understanding. A minority ask probing questions that challenge pupils, engage their interest and deepen their understanding. However, a majority of teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions that stretch and challenge pupils.

Many teachers identify or correct spelling, grammar and punctuation errors in pupils' work and provide suitable brief comments on the quality of their responses. They praise good effort and a majority provide generally helpful feedback on how pupils can further improve their work. In a few cases, teachers over praise mediocre work.

There is too much variation across the school in how often and how effectively pupils respond to feedback, including how well they take teachers' advice on board in future pieces of work. In general, pupils' response to teacher feedback is not consistent enough across the school.

In a few cases, teachers include extension questions in their feedback to help pupils advance. In these cases, pupils generally respond well. However, broadly across many subjects, feedback for higher ability pupils is not sufficiently challenging and does not enable them to fulfil their potential and produce work of a higher standard. Overall, the quality of teacher assessment and its impact on pupil progress is too variable across the school.

R2. Strengthen the provision for literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum

Since the core inspection leaders have restructured suitably the leadership arrangements to support a whole-school approach towards the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Skills coordinators have identified 'champion subjects' to develop the provision for literacy and numeracy. While there has been suitable progress in the provision to develop pupils' English literacy skills, there has not been enough progress in developing the provision for numeracy and digital skills.

The literacy co-ordinator is working effectively with leaders and staff to plan coherently to provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their English literacy skills. There is a strong focus on providing suitable opportunities to develop pupils' extended writing, with a clear emphasis on writing for different purposes and audiences. In addition, teachers have been provided with useful professional learning and resources focusing on reading strategies. However, the provision for the development of literacy skills in subjects delivered through the medium of Welsh is underdeveloped and there is no clear leadership of this aspect.

Leaders have identified a variety of suitable tasks to develop a few aspects of pupils' numeracy skills, for example in adopting a consistent approach to how pupils draw and interpret graphs. However, these tasks are not always meaningful and do not always develop pupils' subject knowledge and understanding, especially in subjects outside the relevant 'champion subjects' of science, geography and design technology. The quality of the opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in real life contexts is variable and they are not always suitably challenging.

Leaders have invested in improving the school's digital resources to support pupils' learning. In addition, the digital coordinator has worked with curriculum leaders and they are beginning to develop meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills across most subjects.

Skills co-ordinators evaluate the appropriateness of the provision to develop pupils' skills, especially the 'milestone tasks', through work scrutiny activities. However, these activities do not focus suitably on the quality of pupils' work or the standards achieved.

R3. Strengthen improvement planning processes

Following the core inspection in October 2022, there was a period of instability as a new senior leadership team settled into their roles. The substantive headteacher left his post in April 2024 and an interim headteacher was appointed. He has created an interim senior leadership team and made changes to leaders' roles and responsibilities. He has also ensured that the school has an in-year balanced budget, despite a longstanding significant deficit.

Recently the school has begun to strengthen self-evaluation processes, which has resulted in a few positive improvements. The school has appropriately identified four areas for improvement in its school development plan and there are generally suitable processes for monitoring progress against these priorities. The school has identified a named governor to support each of the school's priorities, but it is too early to evaluate how well governors support and challenge the school to improve.

The school carries out appropriate activities for self-evaluation and quality assurance purposes. These include the scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and lesson observations, and canvassing the views of stakeholders. Middle and senior leaders produce termly overview reports which provide a summary of the findings from these monitoring activities. This helps leaders broadly identify weaker areas that require improvement, such as teacher assessment and, to a lesser extent, teaching. Middle leaders use their findings to share good practice with peers in 'impact and progress reviews'. However, the evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is

limited. There is little focus on the development of pupils' skills and their subject knowledge and understanding. Whilst these evaluation processes produce quantitative data to demonstrate how well teachers comply with the school's agreed 'lesson essentials', they lack precision about how well learners are learning and progressing. Whole-school and subject area evaluation processes follow mainly a compliance model, with little focus on quality or impact on pupil progress and skills. Due to the shortcomings of this compliance model, leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of teaching in light of its impact on pupil standards is limited.

Performance management arrangements are generally sound. However, objectives are not robust enough to secure progress in teaching and learning and to hold staff to account. There is a limited link between professional learning and performance management.

Overall, there has not been enough progress in important areas of the school's work noted as priorities in the post inspection action plan. As a result, improvement planning has not had enough impact on raising pupil outcomes, improving the quality of teaching and the provision for skills including Welsh, whole-school attendance and reducing the deficit budget.

R4. Address the health and safety issues identified during the inspection

The school and the local authority have successfully addressed some of the health and safety issues identified during the core inspection. Fencing around both the Llandrindod and Builth sites is now complete. There are now suitable arrangements in place to identify and ensure the safety of sixth form pupils at the Llandrindod site. These include lanyards for all sixth form pupils, fobbed entry points and sign-in arrangements.

However, two issues remain. The public access arrangements to the leisure centre and the public parking arrangements during the school day at the Builth campus need to be resolved.

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