

Pontlliw Primary School
Clordir Road
Pontlliw
Pontarddulais
City and County of Swansea
SA4 9FA

03/12/2024

Dear Alison Norman

Interim visit: November 2024

A team of inspectors recently visited Pontlliw Primary School to consider how the school has progressed in addressing the recommendations from its core inspection in March 2023.

During the visit the team had the opportunity to observe teaching and learning, look at pupils' work, scrutinise evidence and talk to pupils, staff, leaders and governors.

Below is a summary of progress against both recommendations. Leaders should use these findings to reflect on their successes and to support further improvements where needed.

Focus of visit

Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and make decisions in relation to their learning

- Leaders are highly reflective, thoughtful and honest. The school's self-evaluation is robust and accurate, helping leaders to establish a strong understanding of the impact of the school's work. Rightly, leaders recognise the need to further develop their whole-school approach to independent learning and have refined their strategic planning accordingly.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have provided staff with relevant opportunities to research and pilot ways to develop pupils' independent learning skills. There has been a particular focus on developing the use of questioning as a tool to ensure that teachers challenge pupils' thinking appropriately. This is having a positive impact, and in general pupils respond positively to questions and challenge and are developing their thinking skills well.

- The school has established useful 'Trust Teams' that enable staff to work collaboratively and share practice in a supportive and low-stakes manner. This approach provides good opportunities for teachers to reflect on and improve their practice. As a result of working together, staff are generally confident in their use of questioning and use their skills capably to facilitate a few aspects of independent learning.
- The school has chosen to promote independent learning through the development of class mission activities. In the best cases, teachers use pupils' ideas appropriately to enable them to practise and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, older pupils accurately calculate the cost of ingredients and resources needed when following a recipe from the time of the first world war. Overall though, these activities are too narrow in their focus and are over-directed. Consequently, they do not enable pupils to fully develop their independent learning skills.
- In general, teachers make effective use of the small classroom environments, although the range of resources readily available to pupils does not always promote successful independent learning. When given the opportunity, the youngest pupils enjoy being curious and exploring the world around them when learning outdoors. This supports them to develop appropriate early independent skills such as learning to work collaboratively and taking risks. On occasion however, there is a tendency for adults to over-direct, or intervene in, learning too frequently.
- Teachers are beginning to provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to make choices in their learning during literacy and numeracy lessons. For instance, when planning extended pieces of writing, older pupils choose how to set out their work so that it reflects the way that they think. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards their learning as they feel that they have ownership of what they are doing.

Ensure that members of the governing body play a full part in self-evaluation processes to support the school to identify all strengths and areas for improvement

- The governing body is diligent, compassionate and purposeful in its support of the school. Governors are proud of the role that they play in working with leaders and staff to have a positive impact on the lives and learning of pupils. Staff are grateful for the support they receive from governors, appreciate their feedback and enjoy the opportunities they have to work with them.
- Governors have a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities and carry these out robustly. They play a full and active role in the school's self-evaluation work. By undertaking learning walks, listening to learners and looking at pupils' work they obtain good first-hand knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, they talk confidently about the impact of the school's recent improvement work, particularly in writing and phonics, and the next steps in the school's development.
- The governing body contributes purposefully to the school's strong culture of reflection. They hold leaders and staff to account and ask beneficial questions, both in formal meetings and during their wider range of visits. This

helps to ensure that they carry out their role as critical friend effectively and act in the best interest of the pupils.

- The school is proactive in seeking the views of its stakeholders. Governors work with leaders to analyse the feedback and comments of pupils and parents. Through this process they help the school to identify trends, celebrate successes and consider ways to address any concerns. In this way, they make a positive contribution to the school's ongoing development.
- The school has thoughtfully structured its full governing body and sub-committee meetings to align with the school improvement plan. This well-considered approach allows a wide range of pupils and staff to contribute to these meetings by presenting, showcasing and discussing their work. This is valuable in enhancing the opportunities governors have to engage with members of the school community, understand the school's work and pose their own questions.
- Governors and leaders place a high priority on supporting staff to develop their skills, knowledge and experiences. Together, they recognise the vital role the school's staff play in the development of pupils' well-being and learning. As such, they deploy the school's finances sensibly to support staff development in-line with the school's improvement priorities. Sensibly, governors use their visits to school to help leaders to establish the impact of the school's financial commitments on learning and teaching.

Overall, the school has worked diligently to address these recommendations. Leaders have a strong understanding of the positive strides the school has made since the last inspection, and what the school needs to do to continue to improve. They have robust and sensible plans in place to make further improvements.

The school's/PRU's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6702192>

Yours sincerely



Liz Miles
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