

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

Maesmarchog Community Primary School

**School Road
Dyffryn Cellwen
Neath
SA10 9LB**

Date of visit: February 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Maesmarchog Primary School 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 special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan which shows 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 improvements. Inspectors will visit the school again, in a further four to six months' time, to monitor progress in addressing a sample of 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.

The Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (Wales) Regulations 2015 state that an induction period may not be served in a school requiring special measures i.e. as described in grounds 6 or 8 in section 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (1). The presumption is that schools requiring special measures are not suitable for providing induction for newly qualified teachers, other than in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, schools requiring special measures should not normally appoint a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to their staff.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Ensure that leaders use evaluation and improvement processes effectively to ensure that the teaching and learning experiences provided for pupils meet their educational and developmental needs

Leaders have set in place a suitable range of evaluation and improvement processes to try and gain a first-hand understanding of the work of the school. This provides them with appropriate opportunities to consider aspects, such as individual pupils' attendance and their well-being. In a few instances, leaders evaluate how well teachers implement improvement strategies, such as the use of instant feedback to support pupils in lessons. However, in general, monitoring activities do not focus sharply enough on evaluating the quality of teaching or its impact on pupils' learning and progress. As a result, there remain

too many inconsistencies in teaching, assessment and the curriculum that hamper pupils' progress, such as a lack of challenge and support at the appropriate level.

In a few instances, leaders use their evaluations to identify where teaching is not strong enough or where provision fails to support pupils' learning consistently enough. In these cases, they consider suitably how to make improvement, such as providing support from other staff or from external partners. While these initiatives are beginning to improve provision in a few areas, currently, they do not ensure that teaching and learning meet pupils' educational and developmental needs consistently well. Leaders have yet to monitor and evaluate the impact of the more recent changes they have made to the curriculum on pupils' learning and their progress.

R2. Provide a purposeful and engaging curriculum that develops pupils' skills progressively

Overall, work to improve the curriculum remains at an early stage. Leaders continue to review provision and work with staff to refine the school's curriculum. However, the curriculum does not yet support the progressive and systematic development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning and experience.

Leaders have provided staff with relevant professional learning to support their approach to the curriculum, which is based around broad concepts, such as relationships and changes. Through close collaborative working, teachers are beginning to share ideas about pupils' skills development and plan learning activities that are more relevant to pupils' interests and experiences. However, this work is at an early stage and has not resulted in consistently purposeful and engaging learning experiences that develop pupils' knowledge and skills progressively over time.

Staff have begun to identify opportunities to enhance pupils' learning experiences and make greater use of the local community. Older pupils now benefit from visits to places of interest and from visitors to the school, which improves their engagement and enthusiasm. However, when developing learning experiences, teachers do not currently take sufficient account of pupils' interests or their prior learning, particularly in classes for younger pupils.

Leaders have invested in published schemes and resources to support teaching and learning in areas such as literacy. As a result, the school has established a more systematic approach to the teaching of pupils' early reading skills, such as their phonological awareness. Nevertheless, provision to develop pupils' wider reading and writing skills does

not ensure that they make strong enough progress. In the learning support classes, teachers build pupils' communication skills well from their individual starting points.

The school has progressive curriculum planning in place to support mathematics teaching. Teachers use this well to ensure that pupils work with a range of practical resources before moving on to more abstract concepts. Across the school, teachers have begun to plan increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. However, pupils' progress in mathematics remains too inconsistent.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate support to improve provision for Welsh. They have rightly focused on ensuring that staff deliver daily opportunities for pupils to practise their spoken Welsh.

R3. Make effective use of assessment information to inform teaching and to support pupils' progress in lessons and over time

The school uses a range of standardised assessments to help monitor the progress that pupils make in areas, such as reading. This helps leaders and teachers to identify pupils who may need additional support with their learning. Teachers use assessments that link with whole-school schemes to help group pupils who are at a similar stage of development. However, in a majority of cases, teachers do not identify or consider well enough the impact of provision on pupils' learning. They do not adapt activities well enough to challenge or support pupils from their individual starting points. Additionally, independent learning activities often lack purpose and challenge. Consequently, a majority of pupils do not make strong enough progress in developing skills, such as their reading and mathematics skills.

In the learning support classes, teachers observe and evaluate pupils' learning and personal development carefully. They use detailed records of pupils' accomplishments to plan activities that meet their individual needs effectively. As a result, pupils make good progress in areas such as their literacy and communication skills.

Teachers are beginning to implement strategies more effectively to help evaluate how well pupils are learning during lessons. Many teachers use questioning sensitively, and provide immediate verbal feedback, to encourage participation and develop pupils' ideas. However, teachers' use of questioning to identify and address misconceptions remains inconsistent. In a minority of cases, teachers tailor questions thoughtfully, listen to pupils' responses and support individuals well to help them understand new ideas.

Teachers share success criteria with pupils helpfully, and this allows them to know what they need to do to be successful. In many cases, teachers provide pupils with written feedback diligently. However, pupils do not always understand comments well enough to know what to do to be more successful in the future. In a few cases, pupils offer their peers verbal feedback on their learning. This encourages reflection and helps to develop pupils' communication skills. At present though, this approach has limited impact on pupils' learning and progress.

R4. Improve attendance, particularly for vulnerable learners

Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened the school's systems for monitoring and promoting attendance. They adopt a consistent, whole-school approach and work with a dedicated team, such as family engagement officers, to monitor individual pupils' attendance. The school's approach is underpinned by the development of positive and trusting relationships with parents and carers. This enables leaders to gain a clear understanding of the specific barriers affecting individual families. Leaders use this knowledge well to provide targeted support to individual pupils appropriately. Leaders promote positive attendance at the earliest stages of school, and this helps to establish strong attendance habits from the start of pupils' education. These actions have a positive impact on attendance figures overall. However, leaders do not evaluate precisely enough the impact different strategies to understand how well they improve attendance or what impact they have on different groups of pupils and their families. Overall, pupil attendance for the last academic year improved from the previous year but remains below the national average.

Leaders work thoughtfully with older pupils to introduce new ways of celebrating improved attendance. Recently, the school has established a scheme, through which pupils earn rewards for good or improved attendance. This helps motivate pupils to attend school more regularly.

Strategies to support vulnerable pupils have contributed to improved attendance for these groups. Despite this, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing suitably but remains above the national average.