



Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all

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: special measures**

**Rhydri Primary School
Rhydri
Caerphilly
CF83 3DF**

Date of visit: June 2015

by

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

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The monitoring team

Jane McCarthy	Reporting Inspector
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Outcome of monitoring

Rhydri Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in September 2013.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards in literacy, numeracy, Welsh and ICT in key stage 2

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 write well in a good range of styles. For example, Year 4 pupils write appropriate letters to Caerphilly Council giving their views on the use of animals in a circus visiting the area and pupils in Year 6 create good quality leaflets to persuade others to visit Cardiff Bay. Most pupils write at least at the expected level for their age, both in their English books and in topic work, using a good vocabulary and a suitable range of punctuation to convey meaning accurately. Nearly all pupils present their work well. By the end of key stage 2, many write neatly in a joined, fluent style. However, across the key stage pupils make too many spelling errors, especially with the words they use in their writing across the curriculum.

Most pupils in key stage 2 read well and make good use of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words such as using the context of the story they are reading. Nearly all enjoy reading and discuss aspects of the story at a mature level, for example by explaining why characters behave in a certain way. The more able read with fluency and good expression, for example by adopting an American accent when reading dialogue in a story. Most pupils make good use of the internet for research, for example when finding out the similarities and differences between various religions. Throughout the key stage, most pupils are reading at, or above, the standard expected for their age.

Nearly all pupils' mathematical skills are good. Pupils across the key stage use their number skills well in their topic work. For example, pupils in Year 4 calculate how much sugar people consume through soft drinks. Pupils in Year 6 apply their skills well through an interesting and relevant range of real life activities. For example, they plan a journey to Patagonia calculating the cost and duration of the trip using alternative routes and different forms of transport.

In all classes, pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) to communicate information effectively, for example using word processing programmes to write newspaper reports and sending e-mails to Jamie Oliver about their topic work on healthy eating. In Years 5 and 6 particularly, pupils routinely use spreadsheets and databases, in addition to word processing packages, in order to present and analyse aspects of their work.

Most pupils are making good progress in Welsh. For example, in Year 4, pupils retell the story of Barti Ddu with good expression and write dialogues describing an alien visitor effectively. By Year 6, many pupils speak, read and write well. They write interesting letters about themselves using varied and appropriate vocabulary. They use paragraphs well to structure this work and use a good range of punctuation, for example apostrophes for contraction, commas within sentences and brackets to add additional information.

The teacher assessment data for 2015, although unverified, shows that standards of attainment have improved this year. All pupils attained the expected level in English with many attaining the higher-than-expected level. In mathematics, most pupils attained the expected level with a majority attaining the higher-than-expected level. The school's tracking system shows that nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have made at least expected progress since September 2014. Data from the national tests indicates that many pupils have made good progress in reading, number and reasoning skills and teacher assessments match well with this. However, it is too early to compare pupils' performance this year with that of similar schools.

Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the more able

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Across the school, the quality of teaching continues to improve and is now generally good.

The acting headteacher identifies aspects of teaching requiring attention and implements a range of effective strategies to support these improvements. For example, teachers plan learning activities with colleagues from another school. In addition, all teachers have regular opportunities to visit other schools to observe teaching and learning. Following these visits, teachers evaluate what they have learned and identify aspects of the work they have observed to incorporate into their own practice. As a result, teachers throughout the school now have higher expectations of what pupils can do.

In nearly all lessons, teaching is lively and engages all pupils well. Teachers across the school plan a good variety of relevant and often exciting activities that build upon pupils' interests. In the Foundation Phase, pupils respond to telephone calls from 'The Bad Tempered Ladybird' by writing letters suggesting ways of cheering her up and write logical instructions for building a wormery sequencing their work effectively.

Teachers plan learning experiences to provide appropriate challenge for all pupils, including those that are more able. For example, planning for writing in Year 2 provides pupils with good opportunities to write in different forms. These include newspaper reports, fact files and letters. Pupils structure these well, making good vocabulary choices. Teachers adapt the work well to meet the needs of different pupils, for example when planning mathematical lessons on finding the area of shapes. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen assessment procedures and fully develop assessment for learning across the school

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Teachers mark all pupils' work regularly. They provide helpful comments about what pupils have done well. More recently, teachers have improved the quality of their feedback to pupils to help them know the next steps in their learning.

In many lessons, pupils assess their own work and the work of others appropriately. Older pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning, which helps them to extend their thinking and reasoning skills effectively. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 know their targets and understand how meeting these will help them to improve their work. Currently, teachers apply assessment procedures consistently across all classes, but these are sometimes too formal for younger pupils and are not always helpful in enabling pupils to understand what they need to do next.

The school has a suitable assessment tracking system to show pupils' progress in both annual summative assessments and ongoing teacher assessments. This is helpful for teachers who now have a clear understanding of pupils' standards of achievement. Leaders hold half-termly review meetings with teachers to discuss individual pupils and to hold them to account for the progress pupils make.

School leaders have introduced a range of strategies to ensure that teacher assessment of pupils' work is accurate. These include moderating activities with other schools and developing portfolios with samples of pupils' English, mathematics and Welsh work at each level. As a result, leaders, teachers and governors now have accurate information about pupils' achievement and attainment.

Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels and develop effective distributed leadership structures

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Leadership arrangements are now working very well. A collaborative arrangement with a local school enables the acting headteacher to share his time between his substantive post and Rhydri Primary School. He has a clear vision and high expectations for the school. The collaborative arrangement and the allocation of shared senior leadership roles across both schools are having a very positive impact on teachers' confidence, pupils' standards and the general pace of improvement. Governors have agreed that this arrangement will continue for the next academic year. This provides the school with an appropriate level of stability.

Teachers and support staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They now work very well together as part of an effective team. In addition, there are suitable mentoring arrangements for the deputy headteacher and appropriate development opportunities for teachers, and well-structured school meetings are in place. These are helping to develop a shared responsibility amongst staff for continued school improvement.

As part of the collaborative arrangement, teachers from both schools work together to plan and monitor pupils' work on a weekly basis during their planning, preparation and assessment time. These joint planning arrangements are working very well, as they provide teachers with valuable opportunities to evaluate pupils' progress and monitor the consistency of, for example, assessment practice.

The acting headteacher has introduced a number of new initiatives and policies and these are working well. For example, in all classes, there is now a consistent focus on good quality enrichment activities for pupils. These activities have improved pupils' attitudes and approaches to learning. In addition, the school environment has improved significantly. The school is now well organised with attractive and recent displays of pupils' work throughout.

Recommendation 5: Develop a robust monitoring system and ensure that self-evaluation is systematic and rigorous and focuses strongly on pupil outcomes

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school now engages in a good range of self-evaluation activities including data analysis, lesson observations, scrutinising pupils' work and gathering the views of staff, parents and pupils. As a result of collecting the views of parents, the school recently revised its procedures for dealing with complaints. The school also uses the outcomes of monitoring carried out by external advisory staff well.

Senior leaders regularly observe lessons. These have a clear focus whereby staff use agreed criteria to make judgements about strengths and areas for development. This strategy, together with visits made to a number of local schools, is helping teachers develop a strong culture of reflective practice and in raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

School leaders monitor progress against the post inspection action plan carefully, considering first hand evidence from self-evaluation activities effectively. The school has identified accurately what it does well and what it needs to improve.

The outcomes of the monitoring and review processes are contained in a comprehensive school self-review document. The school has an appropriate timetable of monitoring activities with a clear focus on pupil outcomes.

The school's monitoring and self-evaluation processes are now robust. However, as they have only been implemented relatively recently, it is not yet possible to evaluate their full impact on standards and provision.

Recommendation 6: Develop further the governing body's role in strategic planning and self-evaluation

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Governors are supportive of the school and are now more engaged in its work. They continue to meet monthly in order to evaluate the progress the school is making in relation to the inspection recommendations.

They have secured an effective collaborative arrangement with a local school that provides Rhydri Primary School with an acting headteacher and an effective senior leadership team. They have agreed to continue this arrangement for the next academic year.

Governors have recently agreed updates and revisions to several important school policies, including one for more able and talented pupils, an attendance policy and a policy for assessment. Governors have also strengthened their committee structure with the addition of a group to focus on pupils with additional learning needs and a more effective finance group.

Many governors have taken part in useful training to support them in their roles. They have been involved in monitoring the work of the school through learning walks and book scrutiny. Governors receive regular detailed reports of the school's progress. These all contribute to providing governors with a better understanding of the school's work. As a result, governors now question and challenge the school appropriately. For example, they have recently challenged the school about the overall quality of teaching and the progress pupils make over time.

The governing body has recently developed the role of link governors allocating responsibility to individual governors for aspects of the school's work. However, this is still in the early stages of development.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to sustain the level of progress it has already made, and continue to address those inspection recommendations where further progress is required.