



*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 of visit  
Level of follow-up: significant improvement**

**Pencoed Comprehensive School  
Coychurch Road  
Pencoed  
Bridgend  
CF35 5LZ**

**Date of visit: February 2013**

**by**

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



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**The monitoring team**

Sue Morgan	Reporting Inspector
Denise Wade	Team Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
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## Outcome of monitoring visit

Pencoed Comprehensive School was inspected in April 2010. Following the inspection, performance at key stage 4 declined and Estyn undertook a follow-up monitoring visit in December 2011. During this visit, inspectors focused on progress against the key issues identified during the Section 28 inspection. The outcome of the monitoring visit was that inspectors judged that the school had not made enough progress in these key areas. As a result the school was in need of significant improvement. Inspectors left the school with two further recommendations to raise standards in English at key stage 4 and to improve attendance rates.

In February 2013, Estyn undertook a second monitoring visit and inspectors judged that Pencoed Comprehensive School had made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in April 2010, and the monitoring visit in December 2011. As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any further follow-up activity. The school has significantly strengthened its focus on improving standards. There is now a much greater emphasis on accountability, challenge and support across all levels of the school from classroom teachers through to the governing body. Data is used more effectively to identify, challenge and support where improvements are needed in pupils' performance. Governors receive regular updates from middle and senior leaders and are better able to challenge and support the school to bring about improvement.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **Recommendation 1: Raise pupils' academic standards significantly in science throughout the school and in mathematics in key stage 4 and health and social care in the sixth form**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection in 2010, standards in science have improved across the school in nearly all key indicators. At key stage 4, the percentage of pupils attaining the level 2 threshold in science improved significantly by 15 percentage points in 2011 and by a further four percentage points in 2012. This sustained improvement has placed the school in the top quarter for the last two years, when compared to schools with similar entitlement to free school meals. Performance at level 1 dipped slightly in 2012 although it was similar to the family average. At key stage 3 in 2012, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level 5 in science increased by 8 percentage points. This placed the school in the top quarter when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving level 6 or above also increased.

In 2012, performance in mathematics at key stage 4 improved significantly. The percentage of pupils attaining the level 2 threshold increased by almost 18 percentage points. This performance placed the school in the top quarter when compared with similar schools. Performance at level 1 has remained fairly constant and similar to the family average.

In addition to improvements in standards in science and mathematics, there have been improvements in standards across the school. This has impacted positively on many key indicators. For example, at key stage 4 in 2012, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics increased by 13 percentage points and placed the school in the top half when compared with similar schools. Previously, performance in this indicator had placed the school in the lowest 25%.

In the sixth form performance in health and social care has improved, with pupils achieving as expected.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure that all members of the SLT co-ordinate the whole-school initiatives of assessment for learning; monitor rigorously and consistently the quality of the work of middle managers; and share best practice to promote outstanding features across the curriculum**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Each member of the senior leadership team has specific responsibilities for leading on relevant aspects of the school's development priorities. Since the core inspection this has included improving assessment for learning, monitoring the work of middle managers and the sharing of best practice.

Assessment for learning, as a key aspect of the school's strategic plan, is supported effectively through regular review procedures. Senior leaders work well with subject leaders to ensure that the marking policy is consistently applied across all departments. The school has also produced a useful guidance document 'The Principles of Assessment for Learning and Review Procedures (2012-2013)'. This is contributing to greater rigour across all departments in the delivery of assessment for learning. Evidence from lesson observations and book scrutiny confirms that self-assessment, as well as peer assessment, is now a common feature of the school's teaching and learning practice. Overall, this is helping pupils to improve their work.

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened the role of senior leaders in monitoring the work of middle managers. Formal meetings take place regularly between heads of subjects, heads of house and their senior link leader. These meetings are largely monitoring meetings that focus on progress and improvement priorities. These arrangements have contributed to stronger outcomes and have enhanced the accountability of middle managers.

The senior leadership team, through their stronger links with middle managers, have ensured that the sharing of best practice within, and beyond, the school is a regular activity. For example, heads of department work closely together through peer observations and paired book scrutiny to identify and share good practice. Senior leaders have also been proactive in supporting staff to develop links and visit other schools with identified good practice. These visits are on-going and are having a positive influence on practice across the school.

**Recommendation 3: Develop the accountability of all post-holders with responsibility in leading teams of staff, consistently monitoring and evaluating practice and planning for improvement**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has given a higher priority to developing the accountability of all post-holders responsible for leading teams of staff. The actions the school has undertaken successfully to achieve this include:

- refining the responsibilities of the senior leadership team and middle managers, to give clearer direction for improving standards and provision at the school;
- revising management and meeting structures to ensure that they are coherent with the strategic direction of the school and address core improvement issues;
- introducing of a more rigorous and consistent system for self-evaluation and planning for improvement;
- making more effective use of first hand evidence such as lesson observations and performance data to set challenging targets and monitor progress towards improvement; and
- where appropriate, using relevant information to address issues of underperformance.

Middle managers meet with their link member of the senior leadership team minimally every two weeks to discuss key issues, timescales and progress towards agreed actions for improvement. These meetings are useful preparation for the termly standards review meetings held with the headteacher and link governor. They also support progress towards the two-year cycle of full subject reviews.

Overall, the lines of accountability of post-holders are now much clearer. Senior leaders and middle managers show a determination in challenging and supporting others to improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, pupils' performance and the quality of learning and teaching have improved.

**Recommendation 4: Ensure rigorous and interdependent systems of evaluating and planning with a clear focus on raising standards of teaching and learning**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened arrangements to ensure greater rigour and interdependence in self-evaluation and planning for improvement by introducing a more robust 'School Quality Improvement Cycle'. This cycle has a clear focus on improving standards of teaching and learning. It includes termly standards subject reviews; biennial subject reviews involving peer reviewers from high performing schools; and revised arrangements for target setting, tracking and monitoring pupil progress. These revised arrangements have had a positive impact on improving the quality of learning and teaching, as well as pupils' performance, attitudes and attendance.

Senior leaders and middle managers have improved their use of data, outcomes from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work to monitor progress towards improvement more routinely and consistently. For example, staff and pupils have a clear and shared understanding of the school assessment tracking system and how it can help pupils to improve and make progress. Where underachievement is identified, actions are taken quickly to address this.

The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning system has also been strengthened through the use of common documentation. The link between school and subject improvement plans is clear and identifies relevant priorities, with manageable time-scales to improve outcomes and provision for pupils. Generally, the school and subject departments' plans set appropriate quantifiable targets for improvement in key indicators for groups of pupils at each key stage.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure that the school's assessment procedures are consistent and are used rigorously and accurately across the school to raise standards. Develop the school's targeting system to ensure that targets are realistic and challenging**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school is making effective and consistent use of an improved data tracking system to identify, challenge and support where improvements are needed in pupils' performance. All teachers now have access to pupils' prior attainment data, target data and current performance data. Each half term the data is shared with pupils. They confirm that they are well informed of their current and expected levels of achievement in different subjects, and of their attendance information. Pupils' targets are reviewed regularly to ensure they are sufficiently challenging. This has had a positive impact on performance.

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened the arrangements for ensuring rigour and consistency in their assessment procedures. Each half term senior leaders share detailed analyses of current performance data with staff. This information is used to inform discussions, and actions, and as the basis for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress to help raise standards.

The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teachers' marking, which is regular, up-to-date and contributes well to improving pupils' performance. Most teachers provide pupils with a clear indication of the strengths and weaknesses in subject-specific terms, and set out clear targets for improvement. A majority of teachers make very effective use of success criteria to encourage pupils to reflect on, and improve the standard of their work. Where marking is most effective there is constructive dialogue between the teacher and the pupil on how the work can be improved. Senior leaders and middle managers undertake regular book scrutinies and provide teachers with useful feedback on the quality of marking and how it can be improved.

**Recommendation 6: Increase significantly the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by addressing the inconsistencies, particularly in terms of challenge, pace and pupils' behaviour**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has revised its arrangements and introduced new strategies to monitor and improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards. This includes providing training for all staff on the characteristics of a good or excellent lesson and how to refine and implement lesson plans to engage and challenge pupils to achieve their best. Senior leaders have undertaken an extensive programme of lesson observations. These observations identify clearly strengths and areas for improvement and have made a significant contribution to improving practice. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching have been reduced.

Internal data held by the school confirms that the proportion of good and outstanding lessons in the school has increased. This data is broadly in line with the judgements made on teaching in the lessons observed during the follow-up visit. In these lessons, pupils engaged well with their learning and their behaviour was good. In nearly all lessons there was appropriate pace and challenge.

Where teaching was very effective, the most common features were:

- teachers' high expectations and the level of challenge of the tasks are very demanding;
- teachers plan lessons imaginatively to motivate and engage all pupils, and the pace of the lesson is brisk enabling pupils to make rapid progress; and the use of a wide range of teaching methods and resources, coupled with well-chosen activities, and opportunities for independent learning that help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding.

The school's learning forum has provided a worthwhile platform to share good practice and strengthen teaching strategies in departments. This is helping to increase the rigour and challenge in teaching. The school's working groups are also having a positive impact. They provide opportunities for staff to discuss and share features of excellent practice. Teachers follow-up these discussions by reflecting on and, where appropriate, refining their own practice.

**Recommendation 7: Raise standards in English at key stage 4**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

In 2012, at key stage 4, performance in the level 2 threshold in English increased by six percentage points compared with the 2011 performance. Whilst performance remains below that of similar schools it is closer to the family average. Previously, performance in this indicator had placed the school in the lowest 25% for three of the last four years when compared to schools with similar entitlement to free school meals. Performance at level 1 increased by three percentage points in 2012 to 97% and was similar to the family average.

Since the core inspection, the department has successfully introduced revised arrangements for monitoring standards in lessons, reviewing pupils' work regularly and for target-setting and monitoring progress. These arrangements are not yet fully embedded. As a result, it is too early to assess their sustained impact on raising standards in English at key stage 4.

**Recommendation 8: Improve attendance rates**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The school's attendance has improved since the core inspection in 2010. Attendance in 2010 was 90.3%, moving to 90.7% in 2011, and 92.3% in 2012. Despite this improvement, the school's attendance rate remains below modelled expectations and in the bottom half of similar schools in terms of free school meals entitlement.

The school's unverified data for the autumn term shows an improvement in attendance from 92.8% in 2011 to 93.2% in 2012.

The school's attendance officer, Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and Family Engagement Officer work proactively to ensure that all absences are followed up appropriately. Pupils now have a greater understanding of the link between high attendance and improved performance. They are provided with regular updates through the house attendance leagues and the attendance zones. Pupils know their individual monthly attendance figures and these are shared termly with parents and carers.

Although the school improved attendance in 2012, the attendance of a very few pupils remains far too low.

Inspectors judged that the following recommendation had been fully addressed during the monitoring visit in December 2011.

**Recommendation: Enhance the capacity of the governing body to act as a critical friend of the school by improving its monitoring procedures and holding managers to account more effectively.**

The governing body has strengthened significantly its capacity to act as a critical friend. A group of governors meets every term to scrutinise strategic plans and processes, and works closely with senior leaders to support the development of self-evaluation and improvement planning. Members of the governing body are linked to one or two curriculum areas and governors work with subject leaders to challenge and support to improve performance. There are termly standards review meetings attended by subject leaders, heads of house, senior line managers, link governors and the headteacher. The meetings focus on standards, targets and pupils' progress. Governors provide written feedback after each meeting, which provides stronger support and challenge and increased accountability. Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school, and of the areas in need of further improvement.