



*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**

**Pentrehafod School**

**Date of visit: December 2013**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Alwyn Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Steve Davies	Team Inspector
Denise Wade	Team Inspector
Kevon Adams	Team Inspector

## **Outcome of monitoring visit**

Pentrehafod School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in September 2012.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing Pentrehafod School from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

## **Progress since the last inspection**

### **Recommendation 1: Improve standards in English and mathematics at key stage 4**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

In 2013, at key stage 4, pupils' performance improved significantly in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics increased from 23% in 2012 to 42% in 2013. This is above the average for its family of schools and places the school in the top quarter of similar schools, based on levels of entitlement to free school meals. The school's performance in English at level 2 improved by eight percentage points when compared with performance in 2012 and places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools. Performance in mathematics at level 2 improved significantly by 20 percentage points when compared with performance in 2012, improving from 29% to 49%. Mathematics performance now places the school in the top 25% of similar schools. In English and mathematics, pupils' performance at level 1 also improved when compared with that in 2012.

The school has implemented a range of successful strategies that are contributing to improved outcomes in English and mathematics. These include more effective and robust use of data, strengthening line management responsibilities, and improving the quality of teaching and support programmes for pupils. For example, all Year 11 pupils are mentored, usually by their form tutor. Mentoring is based on performance data and provides encouragement and support to pupils. A group of underachieving pupils receive very effective mentoring from the senior leadership team and senior middle managers. These pupils have been identified by staff using the school's tracking and monitoring system. A regular meeting of core middle managers with the deputy headteacher focuses on the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science, and has this contributed to the improvement in standards. Other successful strategies to improve performance have included extra lessons for Year 11 pupils during school holidays, before and after school and during weekends.

This strong focus on improving performance is evident in the pupils' attitudes and application to their work. Pupils know their targets in each subject and a majority have a mature understanding of what they need to do to improve.

## **Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of teaching and reduce the variation across the school**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have placed the drive to improve teaching as central to raising standards at the school. Rigorous monitoring of teaching in the form of lesson observations, work scrutiny and listening to learners, as well as useful in-service training sessions, have taken place. This has contributed to improvement in the quality of teaching and reduced the variation across the school.

In nearly all lessons there are very good professional relationships between teachers and pupils, which lead to a calm and purposeful working atmosphere. In many lessons, teachers have secure subject knowledge and they maintain a good pace that keeps learners interested and motivated. Effective planning with well-designed and executed learning activities helps to ensure that all pupils are able to improve their own learning and make good progress. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and they challenge pupils to think for themselves. This helps them to become successful independent learners.

In a few lessons teaching is less effective. This is often because the pace is too slow and there is a lack of challenge. In these lessons, teaching does not always meet the needs of learners because tasks set or the level of support provided are not adapted for different abilities. In a very few lessons there is too much direction by the teacher and not enough variety of learning activities.

Marking is regular, diagnostic and supportive and makes effective use of the school's revised marking policy. For example, most teachers write detailed, encouraging comments and provide helpful targets and useful advice to help pupils improve.

## **Recommendation 3: Strengthen the link between self-evaluation and improvement planning**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has made good progress towards strengthening the link between self-evaluation and improvement planning. There is greater rigour and consistency in self-evaluation processes to ensure that the focus is on improving standards and provision. Senior leaders provide good strategic direction and clear objectives in the areas they wish to improve and allocate responsibilities effectively.

Middle managers are more involved in the strategic development of the school. They believe that they are better informed about key issues that impact on their roles and responsibilities. The school is making good progress towards increasing middle leaders' accountability for improving standards and quality.

School leaders now focus more strongly on self-evaluation and improvement planning at whole school, and departmental level. For example, leaders at all levels work effectively using the outcomes from the 'whole school standards review' to

inform judgements in their self-evaluation reports. These reports have a common format and are quality assured by line managers. This has had a positive impact on improving the quality and consistency of reports and strengthened the link with improvement planning. All staff have access to and make good use of these reports and plans.

The school has recently introduced a commercial package to monitor self-evaluation. This is currently used to construct, monitor and update department improvement plans. These plans are working documents, which, are shared with staff and align well with the school improvement plan. The final stage of transferring whole school objectives into departmental action plans is yet to be completed. As a result, it is too early to evaluate the full and sustained impact of this new process.

#### **Recommendation 4: Improve the co-ordination and planning for progression in developing literacy skills across the curriculum**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has made rapid progress towards improving the co-ordination and planning for progression in developing literacy skills across the curriculum. The school's literacy co-ordinator and staff have worked extremely well together to plan and implement a whole-school integrated approach to literacy, with a shared understanding that each teacher, regardless of subject, is a teacher of literacy.

In individual subjects, all departments identify and plan thoroughly for progression in literacy within separate schemes of work. This is co-ordinated effectively by the literacy co-ordinator and monitored through the school's line management arrangements.

To help plan for further developments, the school has successfully introduced a cycle of literacy audits or reviews. Each term there is a separate focus on reading, oracy or writing to evaluate progress and revise action plans. Outcomes from the audit or review have already resulted in the organisation of an extensive programme of training activities for staff to increase their knowledge and understanding on how to develop pupils' literacy skills in each subject. This work has benefited from close collaboration with the local authority and is on-going.

The school's revised arrangements for planning and co-coordinating literacy have also included a revision of the school's learning support and basic skills provision for pupils with additional learning needs. This strengthens the whole-school integrated approach, aiming for pupils to move to non-supported classes more quickly, and it has already influenced literacy outcomes. For example, in 2013, at key stage 3, the school's standardised test data shows that pupils who have the greatest difficulty with reading make good progress following a range of intervention programmes.

The school's combined strategies to improve the co-ordination and planning for progression in literacy across the curriculum are having a positive impact. Evidence from pupils' books and during lessons observed in the monitoring visit shows that many pupils read texts carefully and extract relevant information to answer questions.

Relative to their ability, pupils of all ages skim and scan texts accurately to retrieve or compare information. Many pupils write for more complex purposes as they progress through the school, using an appropriate range of subject specific words. The majority of key stage 3 pupils complete writing tasks well. The complexity of pupils' sentences is appropriate to their ability, although a few pupils' sentences can be overly long, often due to the inappropriate use of punctuation. However, at key stage 3, a minority of pupils do not develop their writing to a high enough standard, particularly boys. The school is taking appropriate actions to address this issue, although it is too early to assess the sustained impact of these actions.

**Recommendation 5: Increase accountability for improving standards and quality, especially through the establishment of rigorous line management arrangements**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has secured increased accountability at all levels for the standards that pupils achieve and the quality of provision. The school's revised management structure sets out clear lines of responsibility. Senior and middle leaders have a good understanding of their own roles and responsibilities and of their accountability in relation to each aspect of their work.

All staff have regular timetabled meetings with their line managers. These meetings include discussion of the progress made by pupils, teaching and learning issues, and progress with addressing development plan priorities. For these meetings, leaders use a common template to record action points, staff responsibilities and deadlines. This is developing into an effective means of holding leaders accountable for the completion of agreed actions, although there is some inconsistency in the recording of action points and deadlines. In addition to the timetabled meetings, line managers also meet middle leaders individually, although the action points from these meetings are not recorded in the formal log.

Line managers implement a range of strategies to challenge the staff that they manage. Performance management procedures are carried out appropriately. A standards review of each curriculum area takes place in the autumn term, using a suitable range of data to evaluate pupils' performance in teacher assessments and external examinations. Line managers also challenge curriculum leaders with regard to the progress made by individual pupils during the year. Pupils now have target levels or grades for each subject, and all teachers record assessments each half-term, enabling leaders to track pupils' progress towards their targets and identify underperformers. Line managers question curriculum leaders rigorously about the actions they are taking to address underperformance.

Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work are now undertaken with increased frequency, rigour and consistency, and senior leaders challenge the curriculum leaders they manage with regard to any issues identified and how they are being addressed. Leaders have taken appropriate steps to deal with underperformance by staff.

Governors have received training in data analysis and are developing their ability to challenge the school on the performance of its pupils. A sub-committee holds the school accountable for improving standards at key stage 4.

It is clear that increased levels of challenge and accountability introduced since the core inspection have begun to have an impact on securing improvements in the school. For example, standards of achievement at key stage 4 improved in 2013 and the quality of teaching has improved. However, as the school's line management arrangements have only recently been further revised, it is too early to evaluate the sustained impact of the effectiveness of this revised structure.

### **Recommendations**

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.