



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**

**Ysgol Brynrefail
Llanrug
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 4AD**

Date of visit: November 2014

by

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

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The monitoring team

Ceri Jones	Reporting Inspector
Catherine Evans	Team Inspector
Rhian Griffiths	Team Inspector
Simon Davies	Team Inspector

Outcome of the visit

Ysgol Brynrefail is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in November 2012.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any further follow-up activity.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards in key stage 4

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since the time of the core inspection, the school's performance in key stage 4 in each of the main key indicators and the individual core subjects has improved. Although the school has made good progress in many of the indicators, performance in English in key stage 4 remains lower than in other similar schools. In addition, there is too much of a gap between the performance of boys and girls in the indicators that include English or Welsh.

In comparison with 2012 figures, there has been an improvement in the school's results in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics in 2013. Performance in 2013 was above the average for the family of similar schools and close to the modelled outcomes, but placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. There has been a further improvement in 2014, and performance is above the average for the family yet again; however, the school remains in the lower 50% of similar schools.

There has been a similar pattern of improvement in the core subject indicator since 2012. In 2014, performance in this indicator is above the average for the family and places the school among the upper 50% of similar schools.

There has also been an improvement in the level 2 threshold; however, performance in 2013 placed the school among the bottom 25% of similar schools and was also lower than the average for the family. In 2014, there is a significant improvement in this indicator, which now places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools and is above the average for the family.

Since 2012, there has been a pattern of continuous improvement in the capped average points score and in the level 1 threshold. In 2013 and 2014, performance in both indicators has placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools and has been above the averages for the family.

Since 2012, performance in level 2 English has improved. However, performance continues to be below the average for the family and has placed the school among the bottom 25% of similar schools in 2013 and 2014. Performance in level 2 Welsh has improved and is consistently above the averages for the family. In 2014, performance in this indicator places the school among the top 25% of similar schools

for the first time since 2011. In level 2 mathematics, there has been an improvement in 2013 and 2014, placing the school above the average for the family, but in the lower 50% of similar schools.

In 2013 and 2014, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has been larger than the average gap for the family in the level 2 indicator including English or Welsh and mathematics, and the core subject indicator. In the main, this was due to boys' significantly lower performance in Welsh and English in comparison with that of girls.

In most lessons, pupils recall their previous learning correctly and build on this effectively. Many use this information successfully when planning investigations and drawing conclusions. However, in a very few lessons, pupils do not have a sound enough grasp of basic subject concepts.

Recommendation 2: Develop provision for reading and writing skills in Welsh and English, numeracy and information technology across the curriculum

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since the core inspection, the school has made strong and significant progress in planning for developing pupils' skills.

The school has created a comprehensive programme of morning sessions to provide additional literacy and numeracy support to all pupils. This is a valuable initiative that has had a positive effect on pupils' standards of reading and numeracy in key stage 3.

Provision for developing writing skills in Welsh and English across subjects is comprehensive. The school has developed a high quality language booklet to help pupils recognise the features and purpose of different forms of writing. Subject departments have planned in detail to present written tasks that encompass a variety of forms and styles across subjects. In many subjects, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to re-draft in order to improve the standard of content and language. As a result, most pupils produce extended pieces of writing of a high standard across subjects. However, elementary spelling and grammatical errors remain in a few pupils' English written work.

In most lessons, teachers offer pupils valuable opportunities to develop their reading skills in Welsh and English. Most teachers across subjects plan carefully to develop pupils' ability to select relevant information and use quotations to support their opinions. Most pupils read fluently in Welsh and many of them have sound reading skills in English. However, a few very pupils, particular those who are less able, are hesitant when they come across unfamiliar English words.

Provision and opportunities to develop number skills across a range of subjects have developed very well. The school has developed resources of a high quality to ensure teachers' consistency when presenting number skills within subjects. Certain departments contribute purposeful tasks to extend and develop number skills. As a result, most pupils develop their numeracy skills well in a range of subjects. They are

able to plot graphs correctly and the most able pupils are able to select the line of best fit to identify patterns within the data. Many pupils have a firm grasp of how to convert measurements when using different units.

Provision to develop information technology skills across the curriculum is sound, and there has been a significant investment in software and equipment to support teachers in offering wider experiences to pupils. Nearly all departments now provide purposeful tasks to develop information and communication technology skills.

Recommendation 3: Improve consistency in the quality of marking and feedback to parents

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since the core inspection, the school has introduced a number of effective strategies to improve consistency in the quality of marking and feedback to parents.

The school has introduced a detailed training programme for teachers on how to mark and give effective feedback. In addition, teachers across the departments have been given beneficial opportunities to scrutinise other departments' marking and to share good practice. Managers have monitored the quality of marking thoroughly across departments. As a result, most teachers now mark pupils' work regularly and many give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. Most teachers focus consistently on literacy issues and offer constructive observations on how to improve aspects relating to punctuation and grammar. This has a positive effect on the standard of pupils' extended writing and their understanding of what they need to do to refine and improve their skills.

In many departments, pupils re-draft their work regularly, and take advice and comments into consideration to produce work of high quality. However, in a few cases, teachers do not provide useful enough feedback to ensure improvements in the quality of pupils' work. In addition, a very few teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to respond to feedback.

Most teachers train pupils thoroughly on how to self-assess and assess the work of their peers. In many lessons, pupils deepen their learning by assessing their own work or the work of their peers. However, in a few cases, pupils do not produce targets that are specific enough or useful enough to help them improve.

Since the core inspection, the school's managers have offered detailed training to staff, have shared good practice and have introduced monitoring arrangements to ensure consistency in the quality of school reports. Reports now include clear evaluations of pupils' progress and offer very useful guidance to pupils and parents.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the role of the governing body as a critical friend

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since the core inspection, governors have developed their understanding of school performance in order to operate more effectively as critical friends. They now have a clear focus on raising standards and they are a self-critical body.

The governors receive useful presentations from members of the senior management team and core leaders in order to improve their awareness of current performance. As a result, they have a sound awareness of the school's strengths and most of its areas for improvement.

The new suitable structure includes the 'cabinet', which discusses strategic and financial issues, and two committees to discuss issues that are specific priorities for the school. This has ensured that the governors focus on the main issues for improvement in their discussions. The governing body's decision to expand the senior management team has increased the school's leadership capacity to ensure accountability.

A strong feature of the governors' work in the close link that they now have with all departments within the school. The link meetings have led to a better understanding of the departments' work and have enabled the governors to challenge purposefully, as well as offering support.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen and ensure consistency in the accountability of middle managers

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

The school strengthened the senior management team by appointing two new members in order to strengthen the accountability of the school's middle managers.

There is now a comprehensive and regular programme of meetings between the middle managers and their line managers, in addition to meetings with the headteacher and their link governors, which have strengthened the accountability of middle managers and ensured consistency. An agreed template has been introduced to record the meetings' discussions, and the action points from the previous meeting act as the first item on each agenda. This has ensured that there is a strong link between the meetings and that leaders implement actions from the previous meetings. In addition, standards, learning and teaching, and progress against the recommendations of the core inspection are regular items on the agenda of each meeting. This has enabled the school to make strong progress during the last two years.

Since the core inspection, the school has introduced a new suitable policy and arrangements for performance management. The development objectives that derive from performance reviews are now much more incisive and correspond well with the aims of the school improvement plan and individual departments' development plans.

The school has introduced a comprehensive programme of training for middle managers, including sessions on tracking and analysing data, and guidance on self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Successful training has been

arranged on how to evaluate and monitor the work of members of their departments in a supportive, balanced and effective way. As a result, middle managers have a sound understanding of performance and quality of provision in their departments.

In order to support the few middle managers who are new to the school, members of the senior management team and more experienced middle managers have offered very beneficial guidance and support. The consistency and quality of middle managers are now strengths in the school's leadership.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen the link between self-evaluation and planning for improvement on a departmental level

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened the link between self-evaluation and planning for improvement on a departmental level significantly.

The school has provided a successful training programme for departmental leaders to strengthen their understanding of how to observe lessons, scrutinise books and analyse performance data. In addition, the school has produced useful success criteria to evaluate the quality of teaching and marking, and to ensure that leaders agree on how to apply them. As a result, nearly all departments now produce a valid detailed and comprehensive self-evaluation report.

There is now a clear link between the outcomes of self-evaluation reports and departmental improvement plans. Most departmental development plans include sensible actions, specific success criteria, timescales, appropriate costs and quantitative targets to measure progress. This detailed planning has contributed towards improving the quality of teaching and feedback to pupils across the departments. This has had a positive effect on pupils' standards of attainment, particularly in the level 2 indicator including Welsh or English and mathematics, and the core subject indicator in key stage 3.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that pupil-governors undertake their role fully

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

Since they began their role following the core inspection, pupil-governors have proved to be an effective link between the governing body and pupils. They now attend the governors' meetings regularly and represent the school's pupils successfully.

In meetings, pupil-governors have presented pupils' views effectively on a number of issues. They have contributed valuably to discussions about the quality of teaching and have influenced the contents of the school's marking and homework policies. In addition, they have contributed beneficially to improvements in issues that affect pupils' wellbeing, such as the queuing arrangements in the canteen. Governors are now more aware of pupils' views and needs as a result of the contribution of pupil-governors in meetings.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve upon this progress, the school should continue to work towards achieving the inspection recommendations that have not yet been addressed in full.