



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 activity: special measures

**Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau
Ffordd Pen y Cefn
Dolgellau
Gwynedd
LL40 2YW**

Date of visit: February 2016

by

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

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The monitoring team

Kevin Davies	Reporting Inspector
Maldwyn Pryse	Team Inspector

Outcome of visit

It is judged that Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau has made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in January 2015.

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

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards and ensure that more able pupils reach their potential

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, teachers have adapted the school's schemes of work in order to ensure that activities respond to the needs of nearly all pupils, including more able pupils. They have mapped opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the areas of learning and the curriculum successfully. As a result, teachers provide a wide range of interesting experiences, with a clear emphasis on delivering a practical curriculum that gains most pupils' interest.

Across the school, most pupils develop their oral skills successfully and use an increasing range of vocabulary in different situations. They listen attentively and converse and discuss with their peers and adults effectively. In key stage 2, many pupils speak intelligently and respond eagerly to teachers' questions in English and Welsh. They contribute well to discussions and express an opinion clearly, for example in a debate about building a nuclear power station or wind turbines in the area.

Most pupils' reading skills in the Foundation Phase are developing well. Pupils identify sounds and begin to build words from an early age. They develop as confident readers, and read correctly and fluently. By the end of the phase, they show a sound understanding of the main events and express an opinion about them in a lively way. In key stage 2, many pupils develop reading skills in Welsh and English effectively. They read clearly and with suitable expression. When responding to a wide range of texts, they display an understanding of the main ideas, events and characters. Many pupils glean information from more than one print source and use it successfully in their written work; for example, they refer to the text when expressing an opinion about bombing Japanese cities at the end of the Second World War.

Many pupils' early writing skills are developing effectively. By the end of the Foundation Phase, most write a sequence of sentences correctly in order to convey meaning. They use suitable and interesting vocabulary and use capital letters and basic punctuation regularly. They write in a variety of forms and for various audiences successfully, and spell most familiar words correctly. More able pupils are beginning to vary sentences and use an increasing range of vocabulary and punctuation in their work. By the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils form letters correctly and spell in line with their age and ability.

In key stage 2, many pupils develop their writing skills across the curriculum successfully. They adapt their work appropriately for various audiences and use paragraphs effectively in order to present their work in an organised way and in sequence. Most pupils spell the majority of familiar words correctly and use punctuation successfully. Although there has been sound progress in most older pupils' extended writing skills, a minority do not always use a wide range of imaginative and adventurous words in their work. However, more able pupils use a range of vocabulary successfully to enrich their work, including adjectives, idioms and similes. These pupils use varied syntax correctly and write in an interesting way for a variety of purposes.

Most pupils' numeracy skills develop well across the school. In the Foundation Phase, they use their numeracy skills appropriately to solve everyday problems, including weighing, measuring length, handling data and counting money. In key stage 2, most pupils apply their number skills purposefully across the curriculum. They discuss data knowledgeably and use it to create reports on a variety of topics. For example, they write a report on the number of visitors who visits the castles of Gwynedd. Teachers challenge more able pupils successfully, through purposeful activities that extend their understanding of various numeracy concepts.

Recommendation 2: Develop robust procedures for assessment, and use findings in order to provide appropriate intervention programmes for pupils

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has taken effective steps to ensure consistency in the use of assessment processes across the school. Teachers' assessments and results of standardised tests are used successfully to assess pupils' achievement and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers use the information effectively to identify specific groups of pupils and to provide intervention programmes for them, including more able pupils. They use the tracking system in order to track their progress very effectively. As a result, these specific groups make good progress against their targets. Recently, the school has introduced appropriate intervention programmes to boost the numeracy skills of pupils who perform below expectations. However, it is too early to measure the effect of this on pupils' achievement.

A computer program is used successfully to track pupils' progress regularly. Staff conduct beneficial discussions in staff meetings in order to plan purposefully for them. Teachers take part in standardisation and moderation activities internally and as a cluster of local schools. As a result, teachers have a robust knowledge of pupils' attainment levels.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that the school has appropriate safeguarding procedures and address safety issues that were highlighted during the inspection

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school's leaders have addressed successfully the shortcomings in terms of the building and the pupil safeguarding procedures that were highlighted in the core

inspection. The governing body monitors the procedures and fulfils its statutory duties in terms of health and safety fully. Recently, the school has begun a period of modernising both sites, and risk assessments are in place to respond to the situation.

Recommendation 4: Improve the school's leadership procedures in order to ensure a more effective staffing structure

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The acting headteacher has put effective leadership procedures in place, in order to ensure a purposeful staffing structure. Specific responsibilities have been allocated to staff and valuable job descriptions have been confirmed and accepted by the governing body. There is a clear level of accountability in the staffing structure and all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Two assistant headteachers have been appointed, and their job descriptions indicate clearly their responsibilities and who is responsible for whole-school decisions in the absence of the headteacher.

The headteacher is developing the senior management team's managerial skills successfully; for example, they produce and submit findings of detailed analyses of national tests to staff and governors. Formal meetings of the senior management team are held regularly and these meetings focus clearly on raising standards and on improving the school's provision and management. This new structure has contributed purposefully to obvious improvements in leadership. It has equipped the two assistant headteachers to contribute considerably to giving the school a strategic direction. As a result, provision has improved substantially and is consistently good across the school. Standards in most pupils' books show good progress since the core inspection.

Teachers have specific responsibilities and they are developing their middle management skills successfully. These experiences have ensured valuable professional development for them and have raised their confidence in contributing to developments at the school.

Following a period of driving the changes himself, and ensuring that staff respond positively and work as a team, the headteacher has nurtured the other leaders carefully. They have had purposeful opportunities and experiences in order to become confident in their new management roles. As a result, they are effective in their work, their reports and presentations are thorough, and their ability to lead has developed robustly. The two assistant headteachers are now not as dependent on the acting headteacher and this ensures that the processes that are in place are sustainable.

Recommendation 5: Develop the role of governors in the school's self-evaluation procedures and ensure that all the school's documents meet statutory requirements

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Governors are developing their role in the school's self-evaluation procedures effectively. An improvement sub-committee has been established in order to monitor progress against the post-inspection improvement plan and to receive reports from a range of external officers. The sub-committee asks meaningful questions and challenges the school about provision and standards. An example of this is the challenge in terms of poor performance in comparison with similar schools, safeguarding issues, and ensuring that suitable procedures are now in place. As a result, the governing body has satisfied itself that it has responded fully to the health and safety issues that were raised during the core inspection.

The governing body's records show clearly the decisions that have been made, and highlight specific questions by members. An example of this is the questioning about early signs of improvement in pupils' standards. They discuss progress against recommendations from monitoring reports and evaluation by supporting partners and external advisers appropriately.

Areas of specific responsibility have been allocated to members of the governing body; for example there are designated members for literacy, numeracy, additional learning needs, child protection and implementing the Gwynedd Language Charter. Many governors have visited the school in order to develop their knowledge about specific areas, including observing lessons and monitoring health and safety issues. These members have written a summary report for the sub-committee, and have strengthened the role of governors in the process of school self-evaluation. It is necessary to continue to provide regular opportunities for governors to visit the school as part of the self-evaluation process and preparation of evaluation reports.

The chair and a number of governors are new to their roles, and have benefited from receiving statutory training for new governors and chairs. Similarly, the remainder of the governors have received detailed training in order to assist them to respond to and challenge the school's performance data. This is beginning to have an effect on their effectiveness as a body. They have received training from an authority officer on how to be effective governors and their understanding of their responsibilities and their focus on priorities is continuing to develop.

The school's policies and documents now meet statutory requirements.

Recommendation 6: Develop self-evaluation procedures that are sustainable and identify priorities for improvement effectively

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has established firm foundations to ensure that effective self-evaluation processes are in place in order to identify strengths and issues to be developed. There is now a termly programme that identifies clearly the self-evaluation activities. This includes observing lessons, standardising pupils' work, scrutinising books and questionnaires for pupils and parents. An analysis of national reading and numeracy tests was conducted at the end of the summer term. The senior management team, teachers and many of the governing body are a core part of the process.

The role of the senior management team in the self-evaluation process is developing robustly, for example by taking responsibility for analysing data for specific years of pupils. There are valuable opportunities for them to report on the findings of the analyses to teachers and governors. The senior management team pays due attention to the result of different groups of learners, for example more able pupils, and ensures specific support for them. However, the school has only recently introduced intervention programmes to develop pupils' numeracy and it is too soon to measure its effect on pupils' achievement.

There is more consistency in the standard of reports that feed into the current self-evaluation report. On the whole, they are thorough, evaluative and identify strengths and areas to be developed correctly. As a result, the self-evaluation report is a valuable document as a strategic tool to move the school forward. It shows clearly that leaders know the school well and know very well what needs to be done to continue with the improvement. Leaders have ensured that provision has improved considerably and is consistently good across the school. Standards in most pupils' books show good progress since the core inspection.

Recommendation 7: Implement plans to improve the school effectively

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have implemented the plan for improving the school following the inspection successfully. Leaders, along with the acting headteacher, set clear targets for strengthening provision and raising standards. They have high expectations and staff and governors have co-operated effectively to ensure significant improvement over the last year. Robust processes are in place, which have a good effect on improving standards and provision.

Recommendations

In order to maintain this progress and improve upon it, the school should continue to maintain the level of progress that it has already made, and continue to address those inspection recommendations where more progress is needed.