



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**

**Plasnewydd Primary School
Castle Street
Maesteg
CF34 9UN**

Date of visit: October 2021

by

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

Outcome of visit

Plasnewydd Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

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

R1. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

Leaders have developed a culture across the school where improving teaching and learning is everyone's priority, and at the heart of the school's work. Together, staff have created a teaching and learning charter that identifies precisely what leaders expect teachers to deliver. This has set clear expectations for everyone and as a result has improved the consistency of teaching and assessment across the school.

In addition, all staff have received significant personalised professional learning and support to help improve the quality of their classroom practice. The deputy headteacher is non-class based for this academic year, to provide coaching and mentoring support to teachers and teaching assistants. All teachers now have a toolkit of well-practised strategies that they use to ensure all lessons are carefully structured, focused and move at a good pace. This has helped to eliminate nearly all instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning and promote professional relationships that generate trust between leaders and teachers. In addition, teachers are increasingly reflective of their own practice and receptive to feedback.

In classrooms across the school, all teachers have raised their expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and the progress they can make. Lessons have clear learning objectives, good pace and include stimulating, interesting activities for pupils to do. More recently, teachers have begun to use the outdoors more regularly and purposefully, and this enhances learning opportunities further.

Teachers and teaching assistants provide ongoing, worthwhile verbal and written feedback to their pupils about how to improve their work. All teachers plan activities that challenge pupils at different levels, taking account of their assessments of what pupils can already do. Teachers generally match the activity to each individual pupil's needs increasingly well. However, leaders have recognised that challenging pupils at just the right level is an ongoing area for further development.

Teachers and teaching assistants across the school manage pupils' behaviour well. For example, class 'bubbles' move around the school calmly and efficiently. Classrooms are positive, purposeful and productive learning environments.

R2. Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics

All staff plan suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills, through focused, well-structured work to improve their speech and language, guided reading groups and targeted phonics and intervention sessions. This consistent provision ensures that all teachers and support staff focus well on developing pupils as

confident readers. As a result, many pupils across the school read aloud confidently and with expression and use a range of suitable strategies to decode difficult words well. Many older pupils use their reading skills appropriately, for example to skim and scan a text for pertinent information. Recent analysis and leaders' monitoring shows that many cohorts of pupils are making at least suitable progress in developing their reading skills and are enjoying reading more than previously.

Across key stage 2, teachers have introduced pupils to an increased variety of text genres. This has resulted in an improvement in their understanding and the level of responses when discussing the features of different texts. Throughout the school, there is a clear emphasis on developing pupils' positive attitudes towards books and learning to read. For example, many classes enjoy hearing their teacher read an appropriate novel to them, as part of their class topic.

Pupils write for a wide range of purposes, and many write at a level suitable for their age and stage of development. Teachers have begun to improve the quality of pupils' writing with a stronger focus on purposeful, extended writing. Across the school, teachers provide a wide variety of opportunities for pupils to write freely that enable pupils to improve the quality and quantity of writing. For example, by the end of reception, many pupils start to hear beginning and end sounds within words and begin to make good attempts at writing simple short sentences. Pupils in Year 2, write detailed accounts of a journey into space. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils make effective progress in developing their writing skills and understand how to use punctuation for effect, for example when writing creatively.

Most pupils across the school develop a suitable range of mathematical skills at an appropriate level and recent analysis shows that many pupils across the school are making suitable progress to reach and exceed the expected levels. Leaders have monitored pupils' mathematical skills rigorously and have identified areas in each year group that require additional focus. Teachers now ensure that they teach and practise skills before expecting pupils to apply them in their topic work. There are more opportunities for pupils to solve problems and to apply their reasoning skills across a variety of curriculum areas. In addition, teachers have recently begun to use rich numeracy tasks that link appropriately to the curriculum topics.

R3. Revise the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils

Although the school is in the early stages of developing its Curriculum for Wales, there are noteworthy improvements since the last monitoring visit. All staff have a growing knowledge and understanding of the four purposes of the curriculum. They have developed comprehensive long, medium and short-term planning that reflect all the areas of learning thoughtfully. Planning is monitored regularly to ensure that pupils acquire the necessary skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT as they move through the school. Together with the pupils, the staff are working to design a curriculum that is engaging, exciting and that meets the needs of the whole school community.

The school delivers a broad range of learning experiences based around themes, such as 'Daffodils and Dragons' and 'We have lift off', that interest most pupils successfully. Teachers are beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils to

make choices about what and how they learn. For example, in Year 2 pupils decided to create a large, colourful piece of art after learning about painting from the Welsh artist Kerry Darlington. Across the school, teachers and pupils work together to improve their classroom and communal areas to create supportive learning environments. An increasing number of lessons make effective use of the outdoor area to extend pupils' learning. The headteacher has recently launched the 'garden project' and allocated areas of the school grounds for staff and pupils to develop to enhance and extend pupils' learning.

To compensate for the current restriction on visits and visitors, teachers provide pupils with a wide range of additional virtual learning opportunities. For example, in key stage 2, pupils engaged virtually in raft building, a rainforest workshop and a workshop with the Welsh Children's Laureate, Eloise Williams, linked to the Senedd Dy Lais project. Most teachers plan interesting opportunities to develop pupils' creative skills through art, music and drama. For example, pupils in the reception class work together using percussion instruments to recreate Jupiter from Holst's Planets Suite. In lower key stage 2, pupils develop their sketching and shading skills well, using examples of space art created by the artist Peter Thorpe.

Teachers have improved the opportunities for pupils to apply and consolidate their skills in a meaningful way across the curriculum. For example, pupils learn and practise their basic writing skills at an appropriate level during English lessons and many consolidate these skills through writing extended pieces in other subjects or areas of learning. Most foundation phase staff provide appropriate areas within their classrooms to develop and support pupils' independent skills. Through enhanced learning opportunities, teachers are beginning to provide enough challenge for the wide range of learners' abilities.

R4. Challenge more able pupils

Most teachers take suitable account of pupils' different abilities and stage of development when planning learning, and plan for three or four different levels of work. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of more able pupils and generally challenge them to extend their learning well. For example, they set challenges at different levels of difficulty and encourage more able pupils to attempt the most difficult tasks. Through careful monitoring of teachers' planning, leaders challenge and support teachers to raise their expectations of what all pupils, including the more able, can achieve. Leaders ensure that teachers' evaluations of pupil progress take appropriate account of the different pupil groups, including the more able.

In the foundation phase, more able pupils concentrate and persevere well when working in different learning areas and respond purposefully to challenges that they have helped to set. For example, in the reception class, pupils decided to create a space travel agent's shop and gradually learned how to buy and sell tickets to each other for a trip to Jupiter. Year 2 pupils who are more able speak knowledgeably and confidently about the planets and write detailed descriptions about William Shatner's trip into space.

Throughout key stage 2, more able pupils work confidently and apply their literacy and numeracy skills successfully in different contexts and make good progress in

their learning. For example, in Year 4 pupils demonstrated their knowledge of Neil Armstrong by confidently answering questions in a ‘hot seat’. By Year 6, more able pupils have a broad general knowledge and demonstrate effective language skills, such as when debating the effects of racism or summarising information about famous scientists.

R5. Strengthen the effectiveness of senior leaders in identifying and addressing shortcomings in standards and provision

Since the last monitoring visit, the substantive headteacher resigned her post and was replaced by an acting executive headteacher. This executive headteacher worked with the local authority and followed due process to reform the senior leadership team to include the substantive deputy headteacher and two leaders with specific responsibilities. In addition, there is now a substantive headteacher who was appointed in April 2021.

This well-focused team of four leaders meets weekly and has a clear, shared, strategic overview of the school’s work. All leaders now have job descriptions that reflect their current roles and responsibilities. The headteacher works closely with other leaders to drive well-considered improvement initiatives, and to address any shortcomings identified through monitoring.

Over the past 18 months, leaders have monitored the school’s work on a rigorous, planned, weekly basis. They scrutinise planning and pupils’ work, observe lessons and speak to pupils and to staff. They provide individual written feedback to teachers that includes strengths and any shortcomings identified. Where appropriate, leaders adapt their monitoring schedule to provide time to revisit concerns, ensuring that they are addressed promptly and properly. In addition, working together, leaders and teachers set challenging targets for each individual pupil’s progress at regular pupil progress meetings and act whenever progress is not on track. This rigorous monitoring activity has provided leaders with an accurate overview of classroom practice and pupil progress.

Working together, leaders discuss the broader findings of monitoring in senior leadership meetings, and they share and discuss their findings with staff during the weekly staff meetings. Leaders keep useful records of agreed actions and discussion points from meetings, that they use to inform future plans.

Leaders tackle any underperformance confidently, but also ensure that they offer support for their colleagues, for example when teachers move to classes in unfamiliar age groups, or for temporary staff covering for absence. All staff understand and accept their roles and responsibilities but know that they will be held to account for any underperformance where appropriate. However, teachers and support staff also appreciate the support, coaching and mentoring that they receive from leaders, to help them to do their best for the pupils in their classes. These actions have helped to build a culture where all staff relish their core responsibility for the education and progress of pupils in their class, and across the school. This shared culture supports everyone to become ‘#proud to be Plas’.

The governing body has successfully recruited a substantive headteacher with the skills and vision to build upon the school’s improvement journey to date. There is a

committed core group of governors, who challenge and support the school appropriately. For example, they prepare for governing body meetings by submitting pertinent questions in advance to the headteacher. There are a few parent governor vacancies that leaders intend to fill once paper ballots can resume. As the pandemic restrictions ease, governors rightly recognise the need to increase their visits to the school, to gather first-hand evidence that informs their questions and understanding of the school's self-evaluation and improvement cycle.

R6. Address the safeguarding issues identified during the inspection

Since the core inspection, the school has taken suitable measures that significantly reduce the risk of a pupil absconding or unwanted visitors gaining access to the site. The entrance pathway to the reception area has been remodelled. The gate onto the main road is fitted with a magnetic lock to restrict access, and there is adequate CCTV coverage of the area. There are appropriate procedures in place to enable children and parents that attend the Flying Start provision to use a separate gate to access the school grounds.

Over recent time, nearly all staff have received safeguarding training online that is suitable for their roles, including induction training for staff new to the school. Further safeguarding training has been booked appropriately, as face-to-face sessions resume after the pandemic.

Nearly all staff have received training in positive handling techniques. Staff record any incidents of physical intervention appropriately and inform parents promptly in line with training and the guidance from Bridgend local authority.

© Crown Copyright 2021: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified