



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: Significant Improvement**

**Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni
Gelli Haf Road
Fleur De Lys
Blackwood
NP12 3JQ**

Date of visit: September 2021

by

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

[This report is also available in Welsh.](#)

Outcome of visit

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni 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 that are in need of significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve performance in key stage 4, especially among pupils who are eligible for free school meals

Since the last visit, and despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, pupils' standards have improved, overall. Pupils' positive attitudes towards their lessons are a notable feature. Most behave well and many engage enthusiastically in their learning. They work well individually and in pairs and small groups and treat their teachers with respect. These pupils listen carefully to each other and their teachers, and many follow instructions promptly.

In many lessons, pupils make suitable progress and, in the most effective lessons, they make strong progress. Many pupils recall previous knowledge effectively, and a majority apply their knowledge and skills successfully. A few pupils make errors in terms of their understanding of basic concepts, and a minority do not apply their skills effectively. In a minority of lessons where teaching is not effective enough, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Pupils' verbal responses are a strength. Many are keen to contribute verbally and, on the whole, a majority express themselves fluently and correctly. They use technical terminology and subject vocabulary appropriately. When completing particular tasks, such as oral presentations on the Caerphilly area in their English lessons, pupils show a sensitive awareness of the audience, and vary their tone of voice to create effect. However, due to the lack of opportunities across the curriculum, a minority of pupils give short responses and do not elaborate enough. A minority discuss among themselves in English in Welsh-medium lessons.

When reading, many pupils locate information efficiently and develop their understanding of subject concepts beneficially. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority of pupils develop their higher order reading skills appropriately, for example when analysing political cartoons or gathering information from a variety of sources in history lessons.

Many pupils construct sentences purposefully and use paragraphs appropriately. They have suitable vocabulary, on the whole, but the vocabulary of a minority of pupils is basic. As this visit was conducted after the periods of lockdown, and due to the restrictions on the activities that it was possible to undertake during the visit, it was not possible for us to evaluate pupils' writing or reading skills in full.

Most pupils recall information effectively about different types of numbers, and many have appropriate number skills. Many show a sound understanding of shape and measurement, for example when calculating missing sides and angles by using trigonometry, and are able to apply their understanding to solve problems.

Because they have been learning online during the periods of lockdown, most pupils are confident when using devices and apps for learning. They also use basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills competently, for example to present information and conduct research for the Skills Challenge Certificate. In ICT lessons and a few other subjects, pupils are developing their advanced ICT skills well, for example by creating and using databases, and devising and using formulae to create a multiple-choice quiz.

When they are given an opportunity, many pupils develop their thinking skills and creativity effectively. For example, they use light boxes to experiment creatively with drawing techniques in their art lessons. They can reason intelligently and explain their views clearly, for example when developing their estimating techniques in their mathematics lessons. They are also able to make connections between subjects, for example between different languages in their French lessons. However, in general, pupils do not develop these thinking and creative skills sufficiently due to a lack of opportunities.

When practising their physical skills, a majority of pupils demonstrate high fitness levels. They have a sound understanding of techniques and can apply them effectively, such as when learning interception techniques while playing netball. The physical skills of a minority of pupils are of a high standard.

The 2019 results are the most recent key stage 4 results that have been collected nationally and verified externally. On the whole, the school's performance in 2019 was better than in previous years and similar to the performance of similar schools. In 2019, the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals was better, overall, than in 2018, but slightly lower than that of their peers in similar schools.

Since the last monitoring visit, leaders have focused on refining and developing the school's structures and processes to ensure better communication and consistency across both sites. The senior leadership team has been restructured and expanded to focus on the school's priorities, and the school has developed an appropriate line management system. This enables senior leaders and middle leaders to operate more strategically, and support and challenge staff. However, the middle leadership structure does not align fully with the school's strategic direction.

The school offers a wide range of valuable professional learning activities, including how to use progress-tracking data. Based on this, many leaders have a better awareness of pupils' performance in their areas.

On the whole, the school has appropriate processes and an appropriate calendar of self-evaluation activities, but because of the pandemic, it has not been able to implement them in full. However, a few middle leaders do not identify specific areas for development in terms of teaching in their departments. As a result, not all improvement plans are strategic enough or give enough attention to classroom pedagogy.

R2. Improve attendance levels

Since the core inspection, the school has developed an effective strategy that has led to improvement in terms of pupils' attendance. The school now gives attendance a high profile. The attendance officer, tutors and leaders analyse attendance data in detail and use this information, in addition to their good knowledge of pupils, to address any concerns about the attendance of individuals or groups of learners.

There is a robust and graduated system of varied and useful interventions to support pupils to attend school. Staff work proactively with parents and pupils to promote attendance, and there are appropriate systems for rewarding high attendance. As a result, in 2018 and 2019, attendance rates, persistent absences and the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals compared favourably with rates in similar schools.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has strengthened its wellbeing provision successfully, and this has had a positive effect on attendance. The school has restructured the wellbeing team purposefully, and everyone's roles and lines of accountability are now clear. Leaders work effectively to create a strategic direction to support pupils' wellbeing. They seek pupils' views and use data successfully to evaluate the quality of provision and plan for improvement.

The sense of a close-knit and supportive community is a notable feature of the school. The school caters successfully for a range of pupils' wellbeing needs, including profound and complex needs. There is a beneficial service to support the mental health of vulnerable pupils, and the school works closely with parents and a variety of external agencies. During the lockdowns, the school worked closely with families to care for pupils' wellbeing and help them to return when the school re-opened.

The school has purposeful interventions to deal with pupils who misbehave or who are in danger of non-attendance. Strategies have been tailored to the needs of all individuals, including valuable support for pupils to cope when reintegrating into the mainstream. The school provides an alternative curriculum to meet pupils' needs and motivate them to attend school. For example, there are college courses and the 'Beat' course, which is a course provided by the police for pupils who display anti-social behaviour. As a result of the comprehensive wellbeing provision, the school has also succeeded in reducing the number of exclusions without lowering its expectations in terms of the standard of behaviour in lessons and around the school.

R3. Reduce the variation in teaching by continuing to share the best practices that exist in the school

Since the last visit, the quality of teaching has improved. However, the areas for improvement that were identified in the last visit remain to some degree.

In most cases, teachers forge a constructive working relationship with pupils. In many lessons, teachers explain subject concepts clearly and provide pupils with beneficial support while circulating the classroom. These teachers encourage pupils beneficially and prompt them to use the Welsh language.

In a minority of cases, teachers plan their lessons skilfully and present topics passionately and enthusiastically. They provide activities that capture pupils' imagination and stimulate them to think further. They have high expectations and encourage pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. In these lessons, teachers respond skilfully to pupils' needs across the range of ability and use appealing resources to stimulate learning.

In a majority of cases, teachers plan lessons with clear objectives. They include a series of activities to ensure progress in pupils' subject knowledge and skills. These teachers are beneficial language models and correct pupils' linguistic errors sensitively. Their lessons have a lively pace and they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

In a minority of cases, teachers do not plan their lessons carefully enough to ensure that pupils achieve their potential. They do not ensure that their lessons engage pupils' interest. Activities are often monotonous and provide a low level of challenge, which keeps pupils busy but does not allow them to make progress. In a few cases, teachers do not model accurate language for pupils.

In many lessons, teachers ask appropriate closed questions and correct any misconceptions appropriately. In a majority of lessons, they check pupils' progress regularly and provide them with beneficial oral feedback. In a few cases, teachers question pupils skilfully. They ask various types of questions and follow up on pupils' responses in order for them to elaborate on their ideas and think more deeply. These teachers use the information from their assessments astutely to set the pace of teaching, and therefore learning.

In a majority of lessons, teachers do not make sufficient use of questioning to probe pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils in these lessons have a tendency to be reticent. They do not develop their verbal skills or thinking skills sufficiently.

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