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Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Special measures

Milford Haven Community Primary
Priory Road
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 2EE

Date of visit: May 2024

by

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

Outcome of visit

Milford Haven Community Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.
As a result, His 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. Establish an effective leadership and governance structure

The headteacher provides effective and thoughtful leadership and has a clear vision for the school's future that is based on ensuring that all pupils are supported to achieve well.

Since the core inspection, the school's leadership responsibilities have been more widely and effectively distributed. All senior leaders understand their roles and, in most cases, their work has a beneficial impact on improving areas of teaching and learning. For example, leaders have developed an engaging curriculum that supports teachers to plan pupils' learning progressively. Many leaders have a clear understanding of the areas of the school's work, and of pupils' learning, that still need further improvement, for instance pupils' digital skills.

Leaders support and challenge all staff purposefully. They regularly consider the impact that teachers and support staff have on pupils' progress and provide individual support for teachers where they identify areas for development. While they have had a notable impact on improving teaching in general, there is still further work for them to do in this area.

The governing body is now stronger and provides more strategic support to the school. Governors receive valuable information from the headteacher about pupils' learning and the school's progress in relation to improvement priorities. They understand the school's improvement priorities and their role in working with, and challenging, leaders to ensure that the school continues to make good progress. For example, they meet regularly with school leaders to review the impact of actions and how well pupils' skills are developing. They understand and review the school's financial position suitably, but the school still has a large budget deficit.

R2. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment to challenge all pupils consistently

Many teachers have made strong progress in developing their teaching skills. Staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of professional learning and regular feedback from leaders. This has enabled staff to address areas for improvement in their teaching and helped to improve the consistency of teaching across the school. The school has successfully employed several newly qualified teachers who have made effective progress against the national standards.

Overall, many teachers now model learning effectively and deliver lessons at an appropriate pace. They share clear learning intentions and success criteria with pupils when appropriate, and this helps pupils to understand the purpose of lessons. In many lessons, teachers build on pupils' prior learning well and use questioning thoughtfully to assess what pupils know and to move their learning forward. In the best examples, teachers challenge pupils' thinking and provide appropriate support that allows them to make beneficial progress. However, a few teachers do not always provide activities that challenge or support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Across the school, teachers develop purposeful indoor learning environments, which provide pupils with good opportunities to learn and develop independence. The school's learning zones for younger pupils generally provide effective learning that challenges pupils' thinking and enables them to make good progress. For example, pupils manage a small budget in the kitchen diner and calculate costs accurately, including the change needed for customers. Teachers have begun to make better use of the outdoor environment. This is particularly successful in many of the younger classes where pupils have opportunities to be curious and explore. In a few classes, teachers do not use the principles of foundation learning effectively enough.

In a few classes, staff model the Welsh language well. This is particularly effective in the youngest classes where staff promote the Welsh language effectively through nursery rhymes, songs and discussion. However, overall, staff do not support or challenge pupils to use their Welsh well enough.

The school's approach to assessment is now more consistent and purposeful. Many teachers use feedback within lessons to support pupils to understand their misconceptions and to move their learning forward. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to improve their work following feedback. Increasingly, teachers involve pupils in the assessment of their own learning, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress that pupils make.

Leaders hold termly progress review meetings with staff to discuss pupil progress and are beginning to refine the way they structure this so that staff take greater responsibility for the assessment of pupils in their care. However, currently there is too much emphasis on standardised assessment data.

R3. Improve pupils' reading and writing skills

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented effective improvements to the provision for the teaching of reading. Overall, many pupils are making good progress in developing their reading skills.

In the youngest classes, leaders have established and embedded a progressive programme for the teaching of phonics. This continues through the school so that all pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge have opportunities to fill those gaps. Teachers in the youngest classes provide a wide range of stimulating activities for pupils to learn new sounds, and opportunities to apply them. They sing songs to reinforce sound patterns and link the teaching of phonics to their class texts to make them interactive and fun.

In the older classes, leaders have put regular planned sessions in place to develop pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Staff plan for the development of pupils' higher order reading and comprehension skills appropriately and reinforce them during independent activities. As a result, many pupils read a variety of texts with expression and understanding. They talk knowledgeably about books that they have read and answer questions about the text thoughtfully. By Year 6 many pupils read fluently and with expression. They understand and show empathy for characters in the stories they read and explain why the author chooses specific words and phrases for effect. Many pupils make predictions and extract information by skimming and scanning texts. A few pupils use inference when discussing more complex texts and explain how they read further on to derive further meaning when faced with new vocabulary.

The school has developed well-resourced class reading areas and a main library for the older classes. Staff also provide reading books for the pupils to take home. Nearly all pupils talk enthusiastically about their new library and reading books. A few enjoy attending an after-school book club where they read for pleasure.

Since the core inspection, the school has developed a comprehensive plan for the teaching of writing. All teachers plan for the development of pupils' writing skills progressively and understand which elements of writing to introduce, and when. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing, with teachers working closely together to plan discrete skills-based lessons and opportunities to consolidate those skills in wider, cross curricular activities. Many teachers of the younger age groups provide valuable opportunities for pupils to practise those skills regularly through interesting, independent tasks and purposeful, staff-led activities.

In general, across the school, many pupils are developing their writing skills well. Around half of Year 2 pupils write complete sentences independently and spell most basic words correctly. Older pupils have regular, valuable opportunities to write in a range of genres and for specific purposes. They often write at length to convey information and to communicate their ideas imaginatively. In Year 3, many pupils write at increased length across a range of genres. They are beginning to develop an understanding how to build a resolution into their writing, such as when creating an adventure story. However, their punctuation and spelling are not always accurate enough. By Year 6, many pupils use a range of sentence structures effectively in their writing. They organise ideas appropriately into paragraphs and show an increasing understanding of the conventions of writing across a range of genres. For example, when writing a fictional story based on the 1914 Christmas truce in the First World War, they use figurative language and an increasingly wide range of vocabulary to create atmosphere.

R4. Improve pupils' numeracy and ICT skills

The school has developed a well-structured plan for the teaching of mathematical skills. Across the school, teachers and support staff engage enthusiastically with pupils. They monitor progress effectively and are responsive to the needs of individuals, for example by providing additional feedback and guidance when necessary. Most staff model mathematical language well. They set clear objectives for learning and provide relevant success criteria for pupils to assess their own progress.

In a majority of cases, where teaching in mathematics is effective, teachers plan activities that are relevant to pupils and have a clear purpose. They ensure that activities match pupils' understanding well and, as a result, pupils make valuable progress. Younger pupils have many opportunities to develop and apply their skills practically indoors and outdoors. Older pupils have worthwhile opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in their wider work. For example, pupils in Year 6 enter data into a spreadsheet to produce and analyse graphs to calculate the mean number of sightings of different bird species observed during the big garden birdwatch.

In a few cases, where provision in mathematics is less effective, pupils are unsure about the purpose of their learning and teachers do not explain concepts well enough to support them to complete tasks effectively. Where this is the case, pupils do not have a secure foundation for their learning.

The school has ensured that the planning for developing pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills is clear and builds progressively on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. This means that all teachers know the expectations for pupils in their year groups and understand how to introduce the skills in discrete sessions. However, there is still not a consistent approach to the teaching of ICT skills across the whole school.

The youngest pupils are developing their ICT skills satisfactorily. Many pupils access online programs confidently to record text or input data to create simple bar charts, for example about their favourite areas of Wales. They take photographs and videos of each other working in their learning zones and upload these images successfully. When given the opportunity, a very few pupils create increasingly detailed presentations, for example providing instructions on how to wash hands properly, using text, images and voice recordings.

In a few older classes, pupils develop their digital skills effectively. For example, many pupils in Year 6 are beginning to develop effective coding skills. They code a digital device successfully to respond to sound or capture and compare light readings across different parts of the schools. They create spreadsheets accurately to calculate the average of their findings. Most pupils create effective presentations to share their research, such as work about the impact of deforestation. However, in general, the teaching and the progress of pupils' ICT skills across the school are still too variable.

R5. Establish effective self-evaluation, school improvement and professional learning processes

Leaders have set in place a broad and detailed timetable of monitoring to help them evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This includes regular and purposeful activities, such as evaluating the quality of teaching and talking to pupils about their learning and progress. In most cases, these activities give leaders a clear picture of the impact of their actions, for example on the work done to improve pupils' reading skills. The headteacher draws this information together thoughtfully to build an accurate picture of how the school is progressing.

As more staff have taken on leadership responsibilities, and their skills and experiences have improved, senior leaders have begun to involve them more in

monitoring and evaluating provision and learning. This is helping to ensure that leaders gather a wider picture of what is going well and where further work is needed. However, not all leaders focus well enough on identifying the impact of teaching and improvement strategies on pupils' learning.

Leaders use the outcomes of self-evaluation thoughtfully to plan for the future. They recognise where further development is needed, such as in developing teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics. In most cases, leaders plan professional learning that links with improvement priorities well, for instance to help staff develop a more effective outdoor learning environment.

Leaders link professional learning with the school's improvement priorities carefully. They provide a broad range of purposeful training to develop important areas of the school's work, such as developing staff's professional knowledge and teaching skills. For example, professional learning for teachers on how to develop pupils' digital skills is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Where individuals or small groups of staff need bespoke training, leaders ensure that they meet these needs in a timely manner, for instance to help staff's teaching of phonics.

Overall, professional learning has a beneficial impact on improving teaching and learning. However, leaders have yet to ensure that all teachers, such as those who do not work full-time, benefit equally well from the professional learning that takes place on a Friday afternoon.

R6. Develop a curriculum that engages pupils and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and progressively

Since the core inspection, leaders have developed a clear vision for the school's curriculum. This is understood and shared by nearly all staff who are committed to delivering the vision in practice. The curriculum is structured around overarching topics that provide consistency in pupils' experiences. Teachers in each year group tailor every topic to ensure that they provide suitable scope and interest to develop pupils' knowledge and skills appropriately.

Leaders have provided useful and comprehensive direction to support teachers' planning for the development of pupils' skills. For example, they set clear expectations about the skills pupils require to write for different purposes and the sequence in which these are to be developed. This helps teachers plan a range of learning experiences that build pupils' knowledge and communication skills systematically over time.

Staff have benefited from appropriate professional learning opportunities to strengthen their understanding of effective teaching methods and strategies to develop pupils' skills. This is beginning to improve consistency in the quality of teaching. For example, improvement in the provision for developing pupils' phonic skills is beginning to accelerate pupils' progress.

Teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to revisit and apply their learning through their topic work and in focused activities as part of the regular 'amser sgiliau'. They take account of pupils' prior knowledge and enable them to contribute to what and how they learn when planning their topic work.

Leaders have introduced more systematic arrangements to plan and monitor provision across the full range of areas of learning and experience. This is helping them to ensure that the curriculum offer is suitably broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils.

The school's curriculum gives a clear and consistent focus to developing pupils' emotional, mental and physical well-being. This impacts positively on most pupils' engagement, behaviour and readiness to learn.

Overall, the structure and guidance provided by leaders and the professional learning undertaken by staff have developed a curriculum that is starting to deliver stronger outcomes for pupils. This is most notable in the development of pupils' literacy skills. The quality of provision for the development of pupils' digital skills is improving more gradually.