



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: significant improvement**

**Ysgol G.G. Aberdâr
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Date of visit: May 2016

by

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

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The monitoring team

Dyfrig Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Morgan	Team Inspector

Outcome of visit

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

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: Ensure that more pupils achieve at the higher levels at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has focused well on improving provision and developing strategies to challenge more able and talented pupils since the core inspection in 2015. Staff have received suitable training on identifying and supporting more able and talented pupils quickly and correctly and leaders have updated the school's policy appropriately. As a result, teachers use valuable strategies, which ensures consistency across the school. For example, there are useful learners' profiles in order to support teachers to assess pupils' work accurately.

In 2015, at the end of the Foundation Phase, performance at the higher outcome in all areas of learning has risen, moving the school to the top 25% in comparison with similar schools. In addition, at the end of key stage 2, assessments at the higher level in English, mathematics, science and Welsh have improved. Performance in English now places the school in the top 25% of similar schools and performance in Welsh, mathematics and science places it in the upper 50%. These outcomes reflect the standards in pupils' books accurately.

Recommendation 2: Improve pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

In general, the standards of literacy and numeracy of the majority of pupils across the curriculum have improved considerably since the core inspection. Many pupils' standard of oral language in the Foundation Phase is very good. Most of them discuss confidently and use rich vocabulary. These standards are maintained through key stage 2, where many pupils present aspects of their theme work orally in a well-informed and clear manner.

Across the activities of the Foundation Phase, many pupils' independent writing skills are of a high standard and show obvious progress over a short period of time. Many write at length across a range of subjects. In key stage 2, writing skills are introduced successfully through a powerful scheme and then developed regularly through themes. As a result, the written work in pupils' theme books shows sound progress.

Many older pupils at the school apply their reading skills well. They acquire information from reference books and the internet confidently in order to find the main

messages in the text, for example when collecting information about the Rugby World Cup competition.

The majority of pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a wide range of contexts. Pupils at the top end of key stage 2 use their numeracy skills effectively to solve problems and to calculate the flow, width and depth of a river. The problem-solving skills of a majority of pupils are developing appropriately, along with their ability to communicate and reason mathematically, for example when reading a map and interpreting various scales.

By the end of key stage 2, the majority of pupils handle numbers purposefully, recall numeracy facts and apply the information appropriately when solving problems. A majority of the most able children give mathematical explanations to support their methods and conclusions.

Recommendation 3: Improve pupils' attendance

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school co-operates closely with parents and the local authority's welfare officers in order to establish effective intervention arrangements and programmes to promote pupils' attendance. The school has clear expectations of parents in terms of informing about any absence. This important message receives regular attention in the school's newsletters to parents and in comments on the school's social media.

Staff respond quickly to any case of unexplained absence by contacting parents on the morning of the absence over the telephone and through a text message. A form is sent to parents, asking them to explain absences. This has led to raising the attendance levels of individuals who have a history of continuous and regular absence.

The senior management team analyse attendance data on a weekly basis in order to track each pupil's attendance. Families in which absence falls below 95% are targeted. A report that indicates their children's attendance is sent home to parents every half term, and indicates clearly if the pupil is at risk of underachieving as a result of any absences. This information is shared with the welfare officer, who visits vulnerable families in order to provide appropriate support.

The headteacher shares the attendance results of every class with the whole school in weekly assemblies. As a result, pupils are proud if their class wins a prize and are aware of the need to arrive at school promptly to register. Nearly all pupils now arrive punctually and the school has worked well with parents to eliminate any pattern of arriving late. This includes offering a breakfast club, which is now used by 25% of pupils.

As a result of these successful systems, which are now in operation throughout the school, attendance has increased a little to 94.8% in 2015. However, the school continues to be in the bottom 25% in comparison with similar schools. Data after two terms shows that this progress is continuing. Current attendance has risen to 95.4%, which is higher than the attendance at this time last year.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that planning for the National Curriculum and literacy and numeracy skills is complete and builds systematically on knowledge, skills and understanding

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The majority of teachers provide a wide range of learning experiences that spark many pupils' curiosity. Most teachers' planning work is consistently good and ensures that the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Phase in full.

The school has established effective planning systems for developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Plans are already having a positive effect on pupils' ability to apply and acquire their skills successfully. Under the guidance of the literacy and numeracy co-ordinator, teachers' plans are based on a thorough overview of skills. This is beginning to ensure progression and continuity from one year to the next.

The school prepares detailed daily lesson plans that ensure that many pupils' skills develop appropriately across the majority of subjects. When assessing pupils' work, teachers record what aspects of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework they have introduced. This information feeds appropriately into their short-term plans. Teachers plan jointly carefully and use additional teaching assistants effectively to support learning and develop the skills of specific groups of pupils through a range of effective intervention programmes. Teachers use an electronic program to track pupils' progress in the skills. Good use is made of these assessment outcomes in order to plan the next steps in individuals' development. However, the school does not have robust enough systems in order to ensure that the range of skills is developed increasingly enough across all subjects and areas of study.

Recommendation 5: Improve planning in order to ensure consistent challenge for pupils of all abilities

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Teachers have adapted and refined the school's short-term planning several times since the core inspection in order to meet the needs of different groups of pupils in each class. This developmental process has helped staff to reflect on their practice and provided them with opportunities to co-operate to develop more challenging learning opportunities for pupils. Internal moderation work is developing gradually. Teachers have received training and work in suitable groups in order to compare, standardise and moderate pupils' work. As a result, teachers have a sound understanding of the outcomes of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 levels.

Planning is now based on current knowledge of pupils' attainment. Teachers are now beginning to focus suitably on providing work that meets most pupils' needs by differentiation, questioning and challenging pupils appropriately. Teachers' plans usually identify different activities, or varied support. For example, during mathematics lessons, younger pupils in key stage 2 develop their understanding of proportionality by choosing activities that ensure an increasing challenge. However,

activities do not always focus strongly enough on developing specific skills, and the practice is not always consistent.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that teachers' comments enable pupils to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has developed an effective policy and procedures for marking pupils' work. The senior management team monitors the quality of comments that are given to pupils and provide feedback to teachers in order to ensure quality and consistency. As a result, many pupils have a good understanding of the marking code and they use it effectively to edit their own work and that of their peers.

Pupils' written work is marked regularly and consistently by teachers. Comments are constructive and indicate clearly what pupils need to do to improve the quality and accuracy of their work. Regular opportunities are given for them to act on teachers' advice and to redraft their work.

Pupils now have a clear understanding of teachers' expectations of how to succeed in a task. Many teachers make effective use of assessment for learning strategies. Two stars and a wish are used in order to produce pupils' individual targets and, in the main, pupils' targets are specific and challenging. Teachers and pupils review progress jointly regularly. The process of sharing success criteria has developed across the school and pupils now use assessment for learning strategies in order to help them to mark their own work. However, success criteria do not ensure a regular challenge in all classes for pupils of all abilities.

Targets for literacy and numeracy are visible in all classrooms throughout the school. As a result, pupils' skills are developing well as they remind themselves regularly of what they need to do to improve their work.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen the role of leaders and governors in order to plan strategically to raise pupils' standards.

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Members of the senior management team have developed their leadership skills effectively since the core inspection and they now work successfully as a team. Leaders' responsibilities are clear and all the school's staff understand their roles and expectations well. All leaders are responsible for a specific recommendation in the post-inspection improvement plan and they work closely with the designated governor to ensure positive progress against the priorities. There is a strong focus on improving provision and raising pupils' standards. The school has a comprehensive timetable for self-evaluation, which includes lesson observation, scrutinising pupils' books and listening to learners. Leaders use evidence from these activities effectively to evaluate progress against the recommendations of the post-inspection improvement plan and to consider priorities for the next improvement plan. However, it is too early to see the full effect on pupils' outcomes across the school.

Members of the governing body have developed their roles extensively. They now have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Many have visited the school regularly in order to observe lessons, scrutinise books and discuss progress against the inspection's recommendations with staff. The findings of this work are shared effectively with all the school's leaders and governors, through the HWB digital network. Governors challenge leaders about pupils' standards confidently. Despite this improvement in their practice, they have not yet developed a robust system to evaluate the effect of recent expenditure on new resources on pupils' outcomes.

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.