



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

Ysgol Ardudwy

**Ffordd y Traeth
Harlech
Gwynedd
LL46 2UH**

Date of visit: February 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

Outcome of visit

Removal from Special Measures

Ysgol Ardudwy 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 special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve standards in key stage 4

In lessons and over time, many pupils make the expected progress in their subject knowledge, understanding and skills. They also make appropriate progress in their literacy and number skills. They complete reading and writing tasks successfully and make valuable oral contributions. This is a substantial improvement in comparison with the time of the core inspection in December 2018.

Many pupils recall previous learning appropriately and adapt and apply their understanding successfully to new situations. In a few cases, pupils make rapid progress, for example in developing their understanding of how the principles of exercise can be applied to improve the fitness levels of specific components in physical education lessons. In a few lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could, mainly because of shortcomings in teaching.

Many pupils listen carefully and respectfully to their teachers and to the contributions of their peers. They express themselves fluently orally and use an appropriate range of subject terminology. A few pupils give answers of a high standard and provide comprehensive explanations. They express their opinion successfully, for example when declaring whether they are for or against building a wind farm in the Harlech area, explaining their views clearly. In a few lessons, pupils are reticent and do not develop their oracy skills soundly enough. They give short, undeveloped answers and their vocabulary is limited. A few pupils also use English in discussions or when responding to the teacher in lessons that are held in Welsh.

In reading tasks, many pupils succeed in summarising events appropriately by scanning and skimming to find facts or style features. They locate facts correctly from a wide range of sources. In Welsh and English lessons, a minority of pupils develop their higher order reading skills successfully and form robust conclusions about messages within various texts when considering the author's style and the use of language. In a few other subjects, pupils summarise information from more than one text or source successfully and draw valid comparisons.

Many pupils organise their written work suitably into paragraphs and punctuate correctly. However, spelling errors and English words are littered throughout the

Welsh language work of a few pupils. Many pupils write fluently for a wide range of purposes and audiences. A minority of pupils use extended phrases and vocabulary to enrich their work and engage the reader's interest, for example when writing a letter to complain to a hotel manager about the standard of service in their technology lessons.

A majority of pupils have appropriate number and measuring skills. They apply their understanding successfully to solve everyday problems in mathematics lessons and other relevant lessons. For example, in their science lessons, pupils use a formula confidently to calculate the volume and density of substances. Many pupils analyse data suitably. They produce accurate graphs and choose the most suitable type of graph to convey the information. In geography lessons, a majority of pupils analyse graphs successfully to form sensible conclusions, for example when using a range of charts to compare the development of countries in Africa.

When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their creativity and thinking skills. In art lessons, many pupils experiment appropriately when using various marks to emulate the style and work of Vincent Van Gogh. In a few cases, where they are given beneficial opportunities, pupils develop valuable skills when working independently to solve problems.

Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful towards teachers, visitors and their peers and treat their work and books with respect. Many pupils settle quickly in lessons, concentrate well, and complete their tasks diligently. In a few cases, pupils lose interest in work, are slow to complete tasks and do not make the expected progress. This is as a result of shortcomings in teaching.

R2. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has introduced sensible strategies to improve teaching, focussing on four suitable priorities, namely: increasing the challenge and expectations, improving feedback for pupils, nurturing pupils' independent learning skills and improving the quality of teachers' questioning. Leaders have also provided guidance and a beneficial series of training opportunities. Over time, they have succeeded in creating a culture where teachers discuss their teaching practices openly and are keen to receive feedback on how to improve. These strategies have led to improvements in the quality of teaching compared with the time of the core inspection.

Many teachers have sound subject knowledge and foster effective learning relationships with their pupils. These teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and participation.

In a majority of lessons, where pupils make sound progress, teachers share lesson aims and explain concepts clearly, by modelling expectations effectively. They plan activities logically to build on previous learning. They have purposeful resources to support learning and plan interesting activities that engage pupils' interest and provide an appropriate challenge. These teachers are good language models who helpfully provide pupils with suitable subject terminology. They circulate the

classroom to monitor progress, identify errors, and provide pupils with valuable written feedback on how to improve their work. In these lessons, there is a good balance between developing pupils' subject knowledge and understanding and their skills.

In a few lessons, teachers have infectious enthusiasm that inspires pupils. These teachers plan lessons carefully for learning and include a series of cohesive activities that build on each other. They adapt the pace of teaching skilfully so that it matches the pace of learning closely. As a result, pupils in these lessons take a genuine interest in the work and make swift and strong progress in their skills and subject understanding.

In a minority of lessons, there are shortcomings in teaching that limit learning and, to a lesser extent, pupils' engagement. In some cases, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough or tasks are unsuitable for the class's ability. In these cases, teachers do not use their knowledge of pupils' ability when planning. In other cases where there are shortcomings, teachers overmanage learning and set too many repetitive and short tasks. These tasks do not always build on each other coherently nor lead to a clear aim.

In a very few lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and dedication. These teachers do not insist on silence when presenting information or giving instructions, or when pupils contribute to discussions.

Many teachers use a series of basic and closed questions appropriately to check pupils' knowledge. They use a variety of beneficial strategies to ensure that they include all pupils in class discussions. A minority of teachers use effective questioning strategies to probe and deepen pupils' understanding, and this develops their thinking skills, their confidence, and their communication skills.

A majority of teachers provide purposeful comments on pupils' work and give them beneficial advice on how to improve their work. These teachers provide valuable 'LLNAU' opportunities to ensure that pupils improve their work and make further progress.

R3. Improve provision to develop pupils' literacy skills

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened significantly its provision for literacy. Leaders have identified suitable priorities and have provided staff with beneficial training. They have introduced effective strategies that have been adopted by most teachers. As a result, there is consistency across the subjects in terms of opportunities to develop literacy skills, and this has had a positive effect on standards of pupils' oracy, reading and writing.

The literacy co-ordinator has received training that is relevant to the role. She has worked effectively with departments across the curriculum to plan valuable opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills. Leaders have provided valuable professional learning opportunities for staff to develop their linguistic skills and have provided beneficial training on how to plan literacy tasks. Purposeful weekly sessions

are now held for departments to share their best practice with the remainder of the staff.

In many subjects, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to write at length. They use useful whole-school strategies, such as 'structure strips' to ensure that pupils structure their work well and write at length. Many teachers draw attention to spelling and grammatical errors but, overall, not enough emphasis is placed across departments on improving pupils' expression and syntax.

All departments now plan useful activities to develop pupils' basic reading skills. The school has recently strengthened provision to develop pupils' higher order reading skills. In a minority of subjects, there are now beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as synthesising, reading between the lines, drawing conclusions, and predicting.

The school has identified the detrimental effect that the pandemic and the lockdown periods have had on pupils' oral skills, particularly in Welsh. As a result, it has focused appropriately on strengthening provision for this aspect. For example, it has increased opportunities for pupils to discuss together in groups during registration periods and lessons. It has also provided beneficial training for teachers on questioning styles to increase pupils' oral participation in lessons. However, only a minority of teachers question pupils skilfully enough to ensure that they develop a deep understanding and convey their reasoning confidently orally.

The school makes purposeful use of standardised tests to identify pupils with weak literacy skills. It provides an appropriate programme of interventions to support these pupils.

R4. Improve the quality and effect of leadership at all levels

Since being appointed in September 2019, the headteacher has undertaken his new role energetically and purposefully. He is a wise and sensible leader who is well-respected among the staff and governors. He has a clear vision and, with the support of the remainder of the senior management team, he has succeeded in developing a shared culture of co-operation in order to ensure improvement. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in pupils' standards and the quality of provision compared with the time of the core inspection. The school has succeeded in ensuring these improvements despite significant staffing issues and challenging conditions as a result of the pandemic restrictions.

There is now a logical structure to the senior management team and duties are distributed suitably, on the whole. Changes in the management structure have led to higher levels of accountability at all levels and to an improvement in the quality of teaching and provision for literacy.

The headteacher has made difficult but beneficial decisions, for example restructuring middle leadership and creating new leaders. Many of these are developing well in their roles. There is now a firm focus in all departments on teaching methods and a shared understanding of the school's improvement targets. There is a purposeful calendar of leadership and management meetings at all levels,

and 'rhannu a rhagori' (sharing and excelling) professional discussion groups. Discussions focus appropriately on raising pupils' standards and improving the quality of provision. Leaders also review progress against the school's priorities for improvement regularly in these meetings and produce suitable action points that are monitored appropriately in subsequent meetings.

The school's performance management systems are appropriate on the whole. Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened this aspect and there are sensible aims that link well with suitable professional learning opportunities. The school addresses staff underperformance sensibly.

The governing body is passionate about the school and provides it with strong support. It is now operating more effectively as a critical friend, for example by challenging the school about the proportion of pupils who continue to study their subjects through the medium of Welsh in Key Stage 4. Governors are beginning to strengthen their links with their designated departments or faculties.

R5. Improve the use of findings from self-evaluation activities to plan improvement

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened its arrangements for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. It has purposeful self-evaluation arrangements and a sensible calendar of activities to gather first-hand evidence about the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Although there is still some inconsistency in how effectively middle leaders use these processes, the arrangements are having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in a majority of cases.

The school has recently provided further guidance and training to ensure that middle leaders have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the school's self-evaluation processes. This includes training on how to observe lessons and beneficial opportunities to scrutinise pupils' work with members of the senior leadership team and external experts. The ability of leaders at all levels to identify strengths and shortcomings through these activities is developing well and a few leaders act very effectively on the findings of this work. However, overall, leaders have not developed their ability to evaluate teaching adequately by judging its impact on pupils' standards and progress.

During the pandemic, the school contacted parents and pupils regularly to seek their views on the arrangements and quality of remote learning provision. Since pupils have returned to school, leaders have developed useful methods to seek pupils' views by holding regular learning forums. A minority of departments use the findings of these forums effectively to adapt the content of their lessons and their teaching methods.

As a result of quality assurance activities such as observations, scrutiny of work and seeking pupils' views, many leaders have a sound understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility. Based on this information, they prioritise training needs to address shortcomings. There are

also valuable and frequent professional learning opportunities for departments to share strong practice with the remainder of the staff.

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