



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**

**Ebbw Fawr Learning Community
Lime Avenue
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6GL**

Date of visit: July 2018

by

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

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Outcome of monitoring

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in February 2016.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve the implementation of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils' wellbeing in the secondary phase, by dealing effectively with any incidence of bullying

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has strengthened appropriately its policies and procedures for dealing with bullying in the secondary phase. These changes have brought about substantial improvements in pupils' wellbeing. The school has refined the leadership of pupils' wellbeing. Leaders of learning have responsibilities that include a suitable focus on pupils' behaviour and dealing with bullying in addition to their overview of pupils' attainment. The anti-bullying coordinator and pastoral managers have added to the school's capacity to monitor pupils' wellbeing and they implement effective restorative practices.

The school has introduced a robust new anti-bullying policy and clarified its behaviour policy. All staff have received relevant training in how to recognise and deal with bullying. The school has increased its expectations of how staff deal with issues and this has led to more consistency in practice across the school.

The school has engaged pupils well in the drive to address bullying and has trained pupils from Year 6 to Year 11 to become 'anti-bullying ambassadors'. These pupils have embraced their responsibilities keenly and have been involved appropriately in developing the school's anti-bullying policy. They listen to their peers sensitively and pass on important information to pastoral leaders. The school has been successful in developing a sense of trust between pupils and staff.

The school has re-designed its corridors beneficially so that there are more open spaces. Staff are deployed strategically in areas of the school where bullying used to take place. Pupils of different ages have separate lunchtimes. These arrangements have decreased congestion during breaks and lesson changeover and led to a calmer atmosphere in general around the school.

As a result of the school's initiatives and consistent implementation of policies, most pupils now feel safe in school and many think that the school deals well with any incidence of bullying.

Recommendation 2: Improve pupils' independent learning and oracy skills in the secondary phase

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has implemented a wide range of strategies to improve pupils' oracy skills and their independent learning. Staff have received beneficial training on how to improve pupils' confidence in discussing and sharing their ideas with others. As a result, there are many more valuable approaches to allow pupils to work together as well as develop their listening and speaking skills independently in lessons. In addition, all pupils in Year 5 to Year 9 have been involved in workshops to improve their skills in speaking and Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have been involved in a worthwhile debating project.

The school's strategies have had a notable impact on pupils' engagement with and independence in their learning, and the readiness with which they share their ideas with adults and their peers. In lessons, nearly all pupils engage well with tasks and most listen well to each other and their teachers. They work well together to share and discuss ideas in order to reach a consensus on their conclusions. They show perseverance when given challenging tasks. The majority respond comprehensively when asked probing questions or when challenged appropriately by the teacher to explain their thinking in more detail. In a few instances, the quality of classroom opportunities is too variable and pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop independence in their learning.

The school has developed an appropriate range of meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. For example, they take on a range of worthwhile leadership roles and have beneficial opportunities to share their opinions on matters of concern to them. The well-attended homework club provides pupils with helpful opportunities to work independently.

Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of teaching, especially in the secondary phase

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has focused clearly on improving the quality of teaching. Its strategies have had a positive impact on the impact that teaching makes on pupil progress.

The school has developed an effective programme of professional learning opportunities for teachers. Leaders evaluate appropriately the quality of teaching and provide useful feedback for staff. The school has also developed successful opportunities for staff to work collaboratively, share good practice and develop specific elements of teaching through its innovative 'Project pawb' programme. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the core inspection.

Most teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and create positive and supportive relationships with pupils. They provide clear explanations and use resources that engage pupils' interest. As a result, nearly all pupils are fully engaged in their learning.

Many teachers plan lessons well and include an effective range of progressively challenging tasks. In many lessons, teachers use effective questioning to check pupils' knowledge and recall of prior learning, probe their understanding and develop their skills. In most lessons, teachers provide effective support and encouragement

for individuals and groups. In a few lessons, teachers do not always plan sufficiently challenging activities. As a result, a few more able pupils do not always receive the appropriate level of challenge to extend and deepen their learning sufficiently.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that self-evaluation and improvement planning draw on the whole range of evidence gathered by the school

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the leadership team has been re-structured and the level of challenge to staff to improve standards, provision and well-being has increased appropriately. They have set clear expectations and established robust systems, in particular regarding the school's arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning. This has had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, including pupils' wellbeing, the quality of teaching and key stage 4 outcomes.

Leaders use a wide range of activities to gather and evaluate first-hand evidence. They are frank in their appraisal of the school's work, and have a sound understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The senior leadership team has provided appropriate support to middle leaders to help them improve their practice in self-evaluation and improvement planning. They now carry out many self-evaluation activities together. This has been successful in developing a common understanding of the school's improvement priorities. This has had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning experiences and the standards they achieve.

Leaders have made effective use of first hand evidence to plan for improvements in pupils' wellbeing and the quality of teaching. However, a few leaders do not focus sufficiently on the development of pupils' skills when monitoring through lesson observations or monitoring pupils' work.

Recommendation 5: Reduce the rate of fixed-term exclusions in the secondary phase

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the number of fixed term exclusions in the secondary phase has decreased significantly.

The school has established a beneficial range of internal provision to support vulnerable pupils. Provision such as the 'Wellbeing Centre', 'Internal Exclusion Unit' and 'Ebbw Vale Engage Project' provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage with learning and meets their emotional and learning needs appropriately. This has had a positive impact on the behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance of pupils at risk of disengagement.

Senior and middle leaders monitor internal and fixed term exclusions on a monthly basis. They use this information well to evaluate the effectiveness of internal provision on pupil engagement and behaviour. Leaders of learning monitor closely pupils who display persistent poor behaviour.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the school meets requirements for the daily act of collective worship in the secondary phase

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has taken appropriate steps to ensure that pupils engage in a daily act of collective worship. The arrangements for assemblies and consideration of weekly themes in form periods provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to discuss and reflect upon important spiritual, moral and world issues. The school provides useful training to support teachers in leading daily acts of collective worship. Many pupils take an active part in school assemblies and benefit from developing topics for discussion as a theme for the week.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to sustain the level of progress it has already made, and continue to address those inspection recommendations where further progress is required.