



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 y Gader  
Dolgellau  
Gwynedd  
LL40 1HY**

**Date of visit: September 2016**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Lowri Jones	Reporting Inspector
Gareth Kiff	Team Inspector
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## Outcome of visit

Ysgol y Gader is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in March 2015.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing Ysgol y Gader from the list of schools that are in need of significant improvement.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **Recommendation 1: Raise standards in key stage 4, including improving pupils' numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology skills**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school's performance in nearly all key indicators in key stage 4 has improved. Provisional data for 2016 represents the school's best ever performance in most of these indicators. The school's performance in 2016 is much better than performance in nearly all indicators in 2015, and is also better than the stronger performance in 2014. According to the provisional data and free-school-meal benchmarks this performance places the school in the top 25% of similar schools in terms of eligibility for free school meals for most of the key indicators at key stage 4.

In the indicator that includes five A\*-C grade GCSEs including Welsh or English and mathematics, the school's performance has improved significantly in comparison with its performance in 2015, and has increased by 9.1 percentage points since 2014. Performance in the core subject indicator has also improved by 6.1 percentage points since 2014.

The capped points score has improved by 18 percentage points since the core inspection, and 31 points since 2015.

Since the core inspection, the school's performance in the level 2 threshold has increased by 15.4 percentage points, and the school's performance in the level 1 threshold has also improved.

In the indicator that includes five GCSEs grade A\*-A, the school's performance has declined since the core inspection. The percentage of pupils who gain five GCSEs grade A\*-A has decreased by 14.4 percentage points since 2014, and is also lower than the percentage in 2015.

Performance in Welsh at level 2 has improved by 5.4 percentage points since 2014, but remains lower than in the other core subjects. Performance in English at level 2 has improved by 6.3 percentage points since 2014, but the percentage of pupils who succeed in gaining level 2 in literature is significantly higher than for those who succeed in language.

In mathematics at level 2, the school's performance is 10.4 percentage points higher than in 2014, and significantly higher than in 2015. The school's performance in science at level 2 has remained steadily high over the last three years, despite a small decrease of 1.9 percentage points compared to performance in 2014.

According to the provisional data for 2016, the performance of boys and girls has improved in most of the indicators in key stage 4. There is not much difference between the performance of boys and girls, except in English language and Welsh.

The performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is strong in 2016, and is better than the performance of pupils who are not eligible for free school meals in most of the key indicators in key stage 4.

In a majority of lessons, many pupils show strong oracy skills. They express themselves clearly and confidently, and explain their opinions sensibly. Many pupils read competently in order to gather information, and a majority, particularly pupils of higher ability, analyse texts confidently. Many pupils produce coherent and logical written work. They use paragraphs correctly and structure their work consistently well. However, there are basic language errors in Welsh and English in most pupils' written work.

Most pupils use the four number rules competently, handle units confidently and draw graphs and charts correctly. However, a minority of pupils are too dependent on a calculator and lack confidence when undertaking mental arithmetic.

Most pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) appropriately to create presentations and to undertake research work. However, there is little evidence of them practising and displaying higher order ICT skills.

In most lessons, more able and talented pupils do not reach standards that are appropriate to their ability.

## **Recommendation 2: Strengthen provision for skills and ensure robust linguistic progression for pupils**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has acted appropriately by introducing and reviewing procedures to improve provision for skills. This has led to clearer and more consistent guidance for staff.

The school has begun to develop cross-curricular provision for improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Increasing opportunities are offered for pupils to write at length, and there is more consistency in the way in which teachers mark and correct work. An appropriate emphasis on functional numeracy skills gives pupils valuable opportunities to develop these skills. There is a useful programme of interventions for pupils who need support to improve their skills. However, as yet, the effect of provision for literacy and numeracy on pupils' standards is limited. In addition, the school's understanding of pupils' standards in these skills is not robust or comprehensive enough.

Provision for ICT has improved in terms of resources, but there have been few developments in terms of developing pupils' ICT skills across subjects.

The school has acted robustly to improve linguistic progression in key stage 3. As a result, these pupils' attitudes towards using the Welsh language and studying through the medium of Welsh are positive. Initiatives such as 'Mudiad Adloniant Dolgellau' and 'Bydis Iaith' (Language Buddies) enrich pupils' Welsh medium experiences both within and outside the school. However, the percentage of pupils in key stage 4 who study their subjects through the medium of Welsh remains low.

### **Recommendation 3: Strengthen anti-bullying procedures and ensure that pupils play a full role in school life**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has acted robustly to strengthen its anti-bullying procedures since the core inspection. Most pupils now feel safe at school and believe that the school deals well with any cases of bullying. There are very few cases of bullying. Pupils have contributed valuably to adapting the anti-bullying policy, and the school ensures that its anti-bullying procedures have a high profile. The scheme of work for personal and social education (PSE) has been adapted purposefully to include specific units on different types of bullying.

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened the role that learners play in school life. The school council plays an increasingly important part in the school's work. The council meets regularly and now discusses a wide range of issues that are relevant to pupils, such as aspects of pupils' wellbeing and features of effective teaching and learning. Two members of the school council have now been elected to represent pupils on the governing body. However, to date, the school council has not done enough to inform fellow pupils of its work.

### **Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of teaching and strengthen the quality of associated professional development**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has developed a better awareness of how to teach effectively. Teachers and pupils have worked together productively to develop a shared understanding of the features of effective lessons.

Many lessons are coherent and are planned carefully. In these lessons, teachers explain effectively and give clear instructions. There are productive working relationships between teachers and pupils, and teachers are good language models.

In a majority of lessons, teachers prepare attractive and purposeful resources, and tasks build on each other beneficially in order to ensure that pupils make progress. In these lessons, teachers enable pupils to work independently successfully, as individuals and in groups and pairs. In a few lessons, questions are challenging and probe pupils' understanding effectively.

In approximately half of the lessons, teachers do not exemplify effectively in order to communicate their expectations of pupils. As a result, a minority of pupils do not understand what is expected of them in terms of attainment. In a minority of lessons, questions are not challenging enough and teachers do not take advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy or numeracy skills in the context of their subjects. In a very few lessons, expectations are too low and tasks do not stretch pupils or engage their interest.

In most lessons, teachers do not adapt work to the needs of individual pupils effectively enough, and they do not ensure that there is enough of a challenge for more able and talented pupils.

The school has introduced a comprehensive programme of training and support in order to improve the quality of teaching. For example, 'teaching triads' have enabled teachers to share good practice and learn from each other. The school has provided beneficial support and training for underperforming teachers and, as a result, the performance of specific teachers has improved.

A programme of training has enabled leaders to be increasingly evaluative when observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. However, the quality of lesson evaluations is not consistent enough and not enough consideration is given to the standards that are achieved by pupils.

**Recommendation 5: Strengthen the quality of leadership at all levels and ensure that middle managers play a full role in guaranteeing the quality of their departments**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the senior management team's responsibilities have been reorganised appropriately. The senior management team now includes the strategic headteacher, teacher in charge, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and two additional link members. Although the structure is fairly new, the senior management team work well together and set clear expectations for the school. New job descriptions include clear responsibilities, and they are more incisive and specific. There is a suitable balance between the senior management team's strategic responsibilities and their teaching duties. Departmental leaders are now responsible for all aspects of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and include the school's priorities in all of the department's work. This has been an important element of the reorganisation.

As a result of the reorganisation, lines of accountability between the senior management team and middle managers are clearer. Regular and useful meetings are conducted to discuss standards, individual pupils' progress and improvement plans. Middle managers have prepared comprehensive and valuable self-evaluation reports. However, the standard of the reports varies too much.

All middle managers have received beneficial training for self-evaluation, analysing performance data and leading a department. As a result, leaders use performance data well to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and groups, and to arrange purposeful support and intervention.

Since the core inspection, governors have developed a sound understanding of the school's work, and they challenge underperformance consistently. The scrutiny sub-committee has begun to hold departments to account through challenging and purposeful meetings. For example, the sub-committee has identified the departments that need to be challenged and has already met with department leaders. There are link governors for each area of the curriculum, and purposeful termly meetings improve their recognition of their link departments' strengths and weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

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