



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**Report of visit  
Level of follow-up: special measures**

**Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn  
Newcastle Emlyn  
Carmarthenshire  
SA38 9LN**

**Date of visit: February 2014**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Robert Davies	Reporting Inspector
Farrukh Kahn	Team Inspector
Kevin Adams	Team Inspector
Sue Halliwell	Team Inspector

## **Outcome of monitoring visit**

Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn from the list of schools requiring special measures.

## **Progress since the last inspection**

### **Recommendation 1: Set a clear strategic direction for improvement that is shared with key stakeholders**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection in May 2012, under the guidance of a new headteacher, the school has made good progress with setting a clear strategic direction for improvement that is shared with all key stakeholders. In particular, there has been a strong emphasis on raising aspiration across the school by setting challenging targets to improve standards. The headteacher and senior leadership team have established clear priorities that are understood well by staff and are supported by detailed action plans. Senior leaders communicate expectations clearly through a range of relevant policies, documents and well-organised meetings.

With the appointment of a new assistant headteacher in September 2013, the roles of members of the senior leadership team have been reviewed and defined more clearly. As a result, line management arrangements have been strengthened. This has led to increased accountability for staff at all levels. Formal meetings between members of the senior leadership team and heads of core subjects now take place each week. Similar meetings with heads of foundation subjects occur fortnightly. There is a clear focus in these meetings on reviewing performance data, which is now collected each month for core subjects and half-termly for other subjects. This is helping to identify pupils who are underperforming and to determine appropriate intervention programmes for them. Performance management arrangements for staff have been strengthened by ensuring that objectives address whole-school priorities and include quantifiable targets that relate directly to the progress of specific groups of pupils. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these arrangements in all areas in the school.

Since the core inspection, the way in which the governing body operates has changed considerably. Their roles have been revised successfully and there is now a better match with governors' skills. Furthermore, the operation of sub-committees, such as the finance, curriculum and staffing committees, is more structured and effective. Overall, the governing body is now better informed about the school's work and now challenges the school effectively.

As a result of these improvements, senior leaders and governors have provided a clearer strategic direction for the school. Staff now work in a more co-ordinated manner to improve the quality of provision and raise standards for all pupils.

**Recommendation 2: Raise standards and improve performance at key stage 3 and key stage 4, with a focus on improving the literacy skills of pupils at all ability levels**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, performance in nearly all headline indicators at key stage 4 has improved strongly. In 2013, performance in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics and the average wider capped points score is above modelled expectations based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Performance in the level 2 threshold and in the core subjects of mathematics and science is above that of similar schools. In the core subjects of English and Welsh first language, performance is below the family average and places the school in the bottom quarter of similar schools in terms of free-school-meal benchmarks. However, in these indicators the difference between performance and the family average has reduced over the last three years. In 2013, pupils make strong progress from previous key stages in many headline indicators. Progress from key stage 2 in the core subject indicator is significantly better than expected.

In 2013, the difference in performance between girls and boys was smaller than the national difference for the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics, the level 2 threshold, and capped points score. Furthermore, over the last two years the performance of boys in English has improved considerably. However, over the same period, the performance of girls has weakened and is below that in similar schools.

At key stage 3, performance has improved strongly in all headline indicators since the time of the last inspection. In 2013, performance in the core subject indicator is above modelled expectations and places the school in the upper half of schools based on free-school-meal entitlement. Performance in the separate core subjects of English, mathematics and science is below that of similar schools, although the difference between performance and the family average has reduced noticeably since the last inspection.

The school is using its tracking system more effectively to identify underperformance and to support pupils through targeted intervention programmes to help them achieve higher standards. This has been particularly effective in mathematics. There has also been a strong focus across the school on identifying and supporting pupils with weak literacy skills, and pupils on catch-up programmes make valuable progress. However, whole school approaches to improve pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum, such as strategies to improve extended writing skills, are yet to impact consistently on outcomes.

In many lessons, pupils make strong progress in developing their skills and understanding of new principles and concepts. Most pupils are engaged well in their learning and apply themselves well to specific tasks. They work effectively in pairs and small groups. However, in a minority of classes, where teaching is not

sufficiently well planned or challenging, a few pupils lose interest and do not make enough progress.

Most pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and to the opinions of others. Many pupils speak clearly and explain their views and ideas well using the appropriate language. However, in a few instances pupils lack confidence and clarity when speaking in class. Most pupils read effectively to extract information, infer meaning and draw conclusions. The majority of pupils write well for a range of purposes such as descriptive work, report writing and evaluation. They use sophisticated vocabulary in their written work. However, for a minority of pupils the quality of their written work is inconsistent across subjects and a few pupils make too many spelling and grammatical errors.

### **Recommendation 3: Ensure better progression in pupils' achievements in Welsh**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has made valuable progress in developing its provision to help pupils to build on their previous achievements and to ensure better progression in Welsh language skills.

The school's provision for Welsh as a first language at key stage 3 has increased progressively and now allows all pupils who studied Welsh as a first language in their primary schools to continue to do so in Year 7. About half of current Year 8 pupils and two-thirds of Year 7 pupils follow the first language course and are building appropriately on their previous achievements in the language. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the core inspection.

Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 can now choose to study a broader range of other subjects through the medium of Welsh, and this provision will extend to the whole of key stage 3 next year. The school is collaborating with its partner secondary schools to offer a broader range of subjects through the medium of Welsh at key stage 4 in order to secure better continuity from key stage 3.

An appropriate bilingual policy is now in place. This sets out clearly how the school intends to ensure appropriate linguistic progression for every pupil in the school. The school has developed the use of incidental Welsh in English-medium lessons, providing relevant support and resources for teachers. Nearly all lessons now include the use of Welsh in relevant contexts. The school has also increased the range of extra-curricular activities offered through the medium of Welsh. Most subjects plan appropriately for promoting the Welsh dimension in pupils' learning experiences. The Welsh ethos working group continues to promote and develop provision and practice, both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils, staff and governors demonstrate positive attitudes to the Welsh language and the school's bilingual ethos.

The school has established suitable links with all its primary schools, including those in neighbouring authorities, and receives appropriate information about pupils' achievements in Welsh in order to plan effectively to meet their needs. The

establishment of a Welsh medium unit, 'Canolfan Iaith', has been effective in enabling the school to meet the language needs of late entrants to the school.

In 2013, performance in Welsh first language at level 5 and above in key stage 3 and at A\*-C in key stage 4 represents significant improvement compared with the previous year. However, in each case performance remains below that of similar schools and national averages. Performance at level 5 or above in Welsh second language is also below that of similar schools. Key stage 3 performance at the higher levels in both first and second language is better than that of similar schools. At key stage 4, performance in Welsh second-language is consistently good.

The local authority has supported the Welsh department in reviewing their schemes of work to help ensure that staff use a variety of stimulating activities to support and challenge pupils across the whole ability range. Staff have taken part in a range of professional development activities that include visits to other schools to observe and promote good practice. All these activities are having a positive impact on provision, although the impact on outcomes at key stages 3 and 4 has been modest to date.

#### **Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of teaching and assessment**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented a range of appropriate strategies to improve the quality of teaching and assessment. These have included training sessions for staff, sharing good practice in the school and visits to other schools to observe best practice. These initiatives are contributing well to a developing professional learning culture in the school and have begun to secure greater consistency in the quality of teaching.

In nearly all lessons, teachers' subject knowledge, class management skills and working relationships with pupils are good. Many lessons are well planned, begin with effective 'starter' activities and include a suitable variety of relevant and stimulating learning activities. In these lessons, teachers are generally good language models, ensure that pupils understand what they are aiming to achieve and provide helpful support for individual pupils. In a minority of lessons, teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils of different ability levels are suitably challenged, maintain a brisk pace of learning throughout the lesson and use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding and promote effective learning.

Although there has been improvement in the quality of teaching since the core inspection, there remains too much variation between and within departments. A minority of lessons still contain important areas for improvement, for example inappropriate timing of activities and pace of learning, learning activities that are not well matched to the ability levels of all pupils, questioning that is too superficial to be effective and a predominance of teacher-led activities. In these lessons, pupils do not make as much progress in their learning as they should.

The school has an appropriate marking and assessment policy. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly. The introduction of a common template for feedback in relation to main assessment tasks has helped to ensure that most teachers comment

appropriately on what pupils have achieved and what they need to do to improve. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of feedback and the clarity of guidance for improvement. There is also too much variation in pupils' response to teachers' marking and comments. Teachers make consistent use of the school's marking code for identifying errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and, in this case, pupils generally respond well by correcting their mistakes.

In most subjects, pupils are involved in assessing their own work and that of other pupils. In a majority of cases, teachers plan and organise this effectively and ensure that assessments are based on clearly understood success criteria; the process has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. However, in a minority of situations, pupils' assessments are superficial and their comments too general to be of real value.

Challenging targets have been set for pupils' attainment in all subjects and most pupils have an accurate understanding of their targets and the standards they are currently achieving. Each half-term, all teachers enter assessment information into a central system. The school uses this information appropriately to track pupils' progress towards their targets and to identify and address underachievement.

**Recommendation 5: Improve the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation to ensure that development plans identify robust actions and priorities for improving outcomes for pupils**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection the school has strengthened the link between self-evaluation and development planning to identify priorities to help improve outcomes for pupils.

The school's self-evaluation processes draw upon a comprehensive range of first-hand evidence to support development planning. This includes regular book scrutiny by senior and middle leaders and an increasing number of formal and informal lesson observations. The senior team and middle leaders work together to ensure that the evaluation activities are rigorous. Beneficial training and development activities have resulted in greater consistency in the quality of evaluations.

The whole school and departmental self-evaluation reports use a range of performance data effectively to make appropriate comparisons with similar schools and with pupils' prior attainment. This includes careful analysis of the outcomes for particular classes and groups of pupils in specific aspects of assessments and external examinations. This has allowed most departments to focus on specific areas for improvement, such as quality of questioning and assessment strategies in lessons.

The senior leadership team has refined the evaluation processes to place greater emphasis on the importance of teaching. This process is helping most middle leaders to identify particular priorities for improvement in teaching. As a result, training and development activities have led to greater consistency in the quality of

teaching and understanding of the most effective teaching strategies to secure improvements across departments.

A rigorous departmental review programme involving observations, scrutiny, listening to learners, consulting with parents and evaluation of standards leads to the identification of appropriate priorities for departments. The action plans produced by departments following reviews are used well in improvement plans.

Overall, the school has strengthened improvement planning arrangements. Self-evaluation processes are rigorous in their evaluation of standards, teaching and assessment. They make possible the identification of precise areas for improvement and the targeting of training, development and support. However, these processes are not as well focused on the evaluation of pupils' progress and skills in lessons. As a result, the school is not consistently assessing the impact of teaching strategies on learning outcomes.

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen the role and accountability of middle managers, with a clear focus on raising standards**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has taken suitable actions to strengthen the role and accountability of middle leaders, with a clear focus on raising standards.

Senior leaders and middle leaders meet regularly. These meetings follow a consistent approach with common agenda items that focus closely on pupils' progress and improving teaching and learning. These meetings are beginning to help middle leaders to challenge their departments more effectively and to improve their leadership skills. This approach is also helping middle leaders to identify key areas for improvement more clearly. However, senior leaders have been too slow in challenging a few middle leaders regarding the quality of teaching and learning in their departments.

Middle leaders are continuing to develop their understanding of the use of data to identify areas for improvement. However, a very few middle leaders do not carry out this approach consistently.

The school has refined its approach to analysing performance data through a more consistent approach to tracking pupils' progress. This has helped senior leaders to identify underperformance at subject, class and pupil level. This analysis is helping leaders to tackle underperformance more effectively.

Since the core inspection, the school's arrangements for middle leaders to scrutinise pupils' work have become more robust. Middle leaders scrutinise samples of pupils' work on a monthly basis. The majority of middle leaders' comments provide useful advice to subject teachers to help them improve the quality of written feedback to pupils. In a minority of cases, middle leaders' judgements are too generous and do not provide an accurate analysis of the quality of assessment of pupils' work. This lack of consistency means that there remains too much variation in the standards of

pupils' work between curriculum areas. However, middle leaders are beginning to challenge this more effectively.

Although the school has made further progress with this recommendation, the rigour with which middle leaders and teachers are held accountable for progress in learning is not yet fully established within the work of the school.

**Recommendation 7: Ensure that policies and procedures for safeguarding fully meet requirements**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has made appropriate revisions to its safeguarding policy, ensured that CRB clearance was in place for all staff, introduced identity badges for all staff and visitors and had installed some relevant directional signs.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

**Recommendation 8: Work with the local authority to address the deficit budget**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has worked appropriately with the local authority to address the deficit budget and has agreed a three-year repayment plan. The headteacher has produced a comprehensive budget plan that considers projected pupil numbers over the short, medium and long term, curriculum plans and the number of teachers required to deliver these plans. It addresses curriculum developments such as the implementation of the intermediate Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and the school's plans to widen provision so that pupils can choose to study more foundation subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Currently the school is within budget and are on target to clear the debt at the end of this financial year, 2013-2014.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.