



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**

**Park Primary School Bargoed
Park Crescent
Bargoed
CF81 8PN**

Date of visit: October 2017

by

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

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The monitoring team

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Outcome of monitoring

Park Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in April 2015.

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: Raise pupils' standards in reading and writing and in Welsh second language, particularly in key stage 2

Many foundation phase pupils know the names of letters and the way that sounds are written. They use this knowledge well to help them read and write. As they move through the phase, they recognise an increasing number of words that cannot be spelled phonetically. They use a range of strategies to help them read and spell words, for example breaking longer words into syllables. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils enjoy reading and discuss their books with a good level of understanding.

Throughout key stage 2, many pupils use their reading skills appropriately to help them research during topic work. For example, pupils in Year 6 use the internet to find out about the impact of global warming on the Earth. However, they are not yet able to put the information they find into their own words and, therefore, tend to copy large chunks of text. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read a range of simple texts accurately, including graphic novels. They show a good understanding of what they have read, for example, by explaining what has happened in a story and what they think may happen next. A few pupils say that they enjoy reading and can name their favourite authors, for example Roald Dahl and David Walliams. However, too few older pupils are reading texts that challenge them or are appropriate to their age.

Pupils who need support to improve their reading skills access a range of literacy interventions that match their needs well. Most pupils who take part in these interventions make good progress.

Many pupils across the school write in an appropriate range of genres for a variety of different purposes and audiences. In the foundation phase, pupils write recounts of a trip to Cardiff Airport and stories about superheroes. They plan their writing effectively, by using story maps to help them sequence the events in a narrative. However, many pupils do not always use basic sentence punctuation accurately. Most pupils form basic letter shapes accurately although there are inconsistencies in the relative size and position of letters.

In key stage 2, pupils write in a variety of ways in their literacy lessons. For example, Year 4 pupils write descriptions of the chocolate room from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. More able pupils use an effective range of writing techniques, for example, addressing the reader through a series of questions. However, across key stage 2, pupils' written work contains too many basic spelling and punctuation errors. Although older pupils attempt to join their handwriting, a majority of pupils have not

developed a neat, fluent handwriting style. Across the school, pupils complete much of their written work on worksheets and this prevents them from practising writing at length often enough.

Many pupils in Year 2 use simple Welsh phrases well. They respond appropriately to instructions and praise provided by teachers and teaching assistants. In key stage 2, many pupils ask and answer familiar questions well, for example, about themselves or the weather. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are keen to talk to adults in Welsh and more able pupils start simple conversations with adults. In Year 6, pupils answer questions about time using the hour, half hour and quarter hour. Many teachers and teaching assistants provide good role models for pupils in using Welsh. For example they give instructions and praise to pupils and use Welsh words for objects and colours in mathematics lessons.

Overall, since the core inspection, pupils' standards in reading and writing have improved. In the Foundation Phase in 2017, pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication at the expected outcome 5, was higher than in the previous year. This placed the school in the top 25% when compared with similar schools. However, attainment at the higher-than-expected level places the school in the bottom 25%. In key stage 2, performance in English at the expected level was also higher than the previous year, and places the school in the lower 50% and at the higher-than-expected level in the bottom 25% when compared with similar schools. Performance in writing remains weaker than reading.

Recommendation 2: Develop more consistency in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment and make sure that these aspects take particular account of pupils' different needs and abilities

The headteacher has introduced clear systems and processes for planning and delivering the curriculum and for assessment. Teachers have worked closely with staff in a neighbouring school to integrate these new systems into their work. Leaders monitor teachers' work robustly and, as a result, there is now a good level of consistency and coherence in classroom practice across the school.

Teachers' planning makes good use of information from assessments. For example, assessments identify accurately the next steps for pupils to improve their writing, and as a result, teachers ensure that they provide opportunities for pupils to practise those particular skills. Teachers provide regular, helpful feedback to pupils about how they could improve their work, using the school's agreed processes consistently to identify strengths and shortcomings. However, not all pupils respond routinely to their teachers' comments and suggestions.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in class and across the school, there are very positive working relationships. In many classes, the pace of learning and the level of challenge is appropriate for many of the pupils. However, activities are not always matched closely enough to pupils' starting points. As a result, a few more able pupils find the work too easy and finish very quickly, while less able pupils struggle to complete the task, even with support, and lose concentration.

The curriculum has a heavy focus on formal, structured literacy. In part this is to address as a matter of urgency the deficits in pupils' basic skills. The structured programmes also provide a scaffold for teachers, in order to develop consistent practices and routines across the school. As classroom practice improves, leaders rightly recognise that pupils' broader learning experiences should match their needs more closely. For example, currently the opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors, or for teachers to deliver the foundation phase curriculum appropriately, are too limited.

Recommendation 3: As a matter of urgency, address the premises issue that affects pupils' wellbeing unfavourably.

School leaders have addressed the issue relating to the school premises suitably. The introduction of an electronic fob system means that supervised groups of pupils can access both halves of the school site appropriately. However, the public right of way through the centre of the site means that pupils cannot access the whole school site independently.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the role of leaders and governors, especially in the relation to self-evaluation and school improvement.

Over the past year, a collaborative arrangement with another local school enables the headteacher to share her time between her substantive post and Park Primary. This arrangement has been highly effective in developing and sharing leadership, teaching, planning and assessment expertise at all levels, between the two schools.

The new headteacher has galvanised the staff team and communicates a clear vision based on the pupils and their outcomes. Together with the acting deputy headteacher, she has provided structure, systems and processes that ensure the rigour and consistency of the team's work. For example, clear job descriptions ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities and contractual requirements. Leaders provide regular, helpful feedback to teachers about the quality of their classroom practice and how they could improve. They provide valuable opportunities for all staff to observe good practice in other schools. Consequently, teachers and teaching assistants have raised their expectations of what pupils at the school can achieve. Performance management procedures are robust and ensure that all staff receive suitable development opportunities, and are held to account for the standards in their classes. As a result, staff morale is buoyant and everyone focuses well on their priority of raising pupils' standards.

There is a clear and coherent timetable for self-evaluation activities. This ensures that leaders complete monitoring activities and analyse pupil data in a timely manner, in order to measure progress and inform the next improvement priorities. As a result, there are good close links between the self-evaluation report and the school development plan. There are realistic targets for all pupils which, if achieved, will further improve outcomes over time. The information from thorough assessment tracking, monitoring and interventions focuses effectively on pupil progress and quickly identifies those pupils who need further support with their learning. School tracking shows clear improvements in accelerating the progress of pupils in the foundation phase and early key stage 2. However, for a few older pupils where there is a stubborn legacy of underachievement, despite the school's best efforts, progress

remains slow and achievement is still not as good as it should be.

Governors are beginning to fulfil their responsibilities in holding the school to account for improved pupil outcomes, through their early involvement in self-evaluation activities. For example, a few governors recently visited the school to take part in first-hand monitoring activities. This is effective in informing their understanding of the school's recent successes, and where there are still barriers to pupils' progress. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work in improving outcomes for pupils. The addition of new governors has reinvigorated the board, which in turn has provided suitable challenge and support for the school's leaders.

In order to build further on these recent, notable improvements, leaders rightly recognise the need to secure the school's future strategic leadership, and continue to work with the wider school community to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they could.

Recommendation 5: Involve pupils more in decision-making about their life in school

School leaders have improved opportunities for pupils to be involved and proud of the life and work of the school, including through a good range of groups and committees.

Members of the school council meet regularly and pupils take on specific roles within the group, including chair and secretary. They carry out these roles appropriately, for example by taking minutes of meetings. Council members have developed an action plan for the current academic year, which includes supporting pupils in the playground and raising the profile of the school within the community. Last term, school council members organised a sponsored run to raise money to fund new play equipment for the school.

Members of the eco-committee help to raise awareness of the importance of looking after the environment. For example, they encourage pupils and teachers to recycle classroom waste and to compost waste from the fruit eaten at school.

More recently, pupils have had opportunities to take on an increased range of responsibilities. For example, pupils act as digi leaders, playground leaders and library monitors. The Criw Cymraeg has helped to raise the profile of Welsh in the school. Criw members teach other pupils playground games that use Welsh and give out awards to pupils for speaking Welsh around the school. They have also visited classrooms to make sure that Welsh words and phrases are on display. Pupils are keen to take on these responsibilities and are proud to help to bring about improvements to the school.

Within the classroom, pupils are beginning to have a say in what they learn. For example, older pupils have chosen to follow a topic about space. In addition, as pupils begin a new topic, many identify what they already know and what they would like to find out. This is helping teachers to begin to focus tasks and activities more closely to pupils' interests. However, this work is at an early stage of development

and pupils are not yet fully involved in making decisions about what and how they learn.

Recommendation 6: Improve attendance and punctuality and reduce persistence absenteeism

The school's relentless focus on reducing absenteeism has had a very positive impact on pupils' overall attendance rates. As a result, attendance has improved rapidly, from around 91% at the time of the original inspection to an unverified figure of 94.7% at the end of the last academic year. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced. Punctuality has also improved, although a very few pupils are still regularly late to school.

Leaders have changed the culture of attendance through robust systems to manage pupil absence. Parents receive a text message shortly after the close of registration, to remind them of their responsibility to let the school know if their child is unwell, for example. The school follows up all unexplained or unauthorised absences promptly with a series of escalating interventions. Leaders involve the education welfare services and local authority suitably, for example considering the appropriate use of fixed penalty notices.

Parents receive valuable information about their child's attendance every half term. Leaders ensure that the school celebrates good attendance, for example, by awarding certificates during assemblies and sending congratulatory letters home. Pupils and their parents are beginning to understand the importance of regular attendance in improving pupils' learning and achievement.

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.