Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: Estyn review

Ysgol Hafod Lon
Snowdonia Business Park
Penrhyndeudraeth
Gwynedd
LL48 6LD

Date of visit: October 2019

by

Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
Outcome of visit

Ysgol Hafod Lon 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 any further follow-up activity.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Raise pupils' standards of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school, in line with their needs

Since the core inspection, the school has established useful processes in order to raise pupils’ standards in information and communication technology (ICT). An ICT co-ordinator has been appointed, sensible priorities have been set and the school has invested in purposeful resources. The co-ordinator has supported staff by providing beneficial opportunities for them to develop a clear understanding of the needs of pupils across the school. As a result of this support, teachers use performance data effectively to evaluate pupils’ progress and plan the next steps in their learning.

The school now has useful information about the ICT skills and expertise of all staff. This is used effectively to plan appropriate training in order to meet staff’s needs. The co-ordinator provides useful weekly ‘drop-in’ sessions, which help staff to develop their skills and gain confidence when using new resources.

In the classroom, many pupils develop beneficial ICT skills to support their learning. For example, they use communication mats to record answers about a story, use electronic tablets effectively to write jointly and use the interactive whiteboard to complete numeracy tasks.

The school has identified the need to strengthen staff’s ability to improve the communication skills of pupils with complex educational needs. Staff have already visited schools that have been recognised as having good practice in this area, and a recognised practitioner has visited Hafod Lon to provide guidance. However, pupils with complex needs do not use assistive technology effectively or regularly enough to develop their communication skills.

R2. Develop a strategic plan for literacy, numeracy and ICT provision in order to ensure that pupils build on their previous skills as they move through the school

The school has developed a robust strategic plan for literacy, numeracy and ICT provision. Leaders ensure that plans to develop these skills are purposeful and focus directly on ensuring that pupils build on their previous skills as they move through the school.

The school has invested heavily in valuable professional learning opportunities for individual teachers, middle leaders and whole-school staff. These include professional training courses, including master’s studies with Bangor University,
beneficial visits to other special schools, and whole-school projects, such as developing as a communication friendly school. The school conducts appropriate activities for staff to scrutinise samples of pupils' work together in order to assess pupils' skills and share good practice. As a result, there is better consistency in the way in which teachers evaluate pupils' work across the school.

Senior leaders support and encourage teachers to plan individual lessons that have a positive effect on developing pupils' skills. They ensure that provision is appropriate to enable pupils to make progress and provide beneficial support, where necessary. Most teachers plan purposeful tasks, which ensure that individual pupils build on their previous skills and make the expected progress.

As a result of these actions, all staff have a sound understanding of how to plan to develop pupils' skills.

**R3. Ensure consistency in teaching and share best practice across the school**

Leaders support teachers successfully to improve teaching and ensure that good practice is shared across the school. Staff at all levels share this vision to improve provision, and work together effectively and regularly to evaluate and improve their practice.

Training two middle leaders to achieve this recommendation has been central to the school’s success. They have strengthened staff’s understanding of good and excellent teaching and introduced a series of measures to support improvement. A significant aspect of this is the regular peer observations, in which teachers, outside the annual performance management cycle, learn from objective feedback on their work and offer useful advice to each other.

The school ensures that there are beneficial opportunities for teachers to discuss their planning and teaching regularly. For example, teachers who teach the same key stages spend planning, preparation and assessment time together. They share their successes and discuss elements that need to be improved in order to plan better learning opportunities for their pupils.

The school has made valuable changes to provision in order to provide suitable opportunities for pupils to work in groups in line with their needs and interest for parts of the week. These changes provide valuable opportunities for staff to teach aspects of the curriculum in which they have specific strengths, including health and wellbeing, science, humanities, ICT and the creative arts. These changes continue to have a very positive effect on the quality of teaching, as staff use their subject expertise more effectively across the key stages.

The relationship between staff and pupils is warm and caring. Teachers have a rigorous understanding of pupils’ needs. On the whole, they use pupils’ performance data sensibly to plan interesting lessons that motivate them to learn. However, staff do not have enough expertise to meet a few pupils’ complex needs in full. Leaders have identified this as an area for improvement and have put suitable measures in place to ensure improvements. However, it is too early to measure their effect on pupils’ standards.
R4. Strengthen the self-evaluation and quality improvement process so that leaders have a rigorous knowledge of the areas for improvement and plan purposefully for whole-school improvement

The school has increased, strengthened and improved its self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes. Leaders ensure that all staff are aware of, and understand, the robust quality assurance arrangements.

Leaders make beneficial use of the findings of monitoring activities, such as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Following these activities, they share suitable summative reports with staff, which identify common strengths and areas for improvement in provision. Leaders then focus appropriately on areas for development during subsequent monitoring activities. Although leaders evaluate the quality of teaching appropriately, they do not always consider the effect of teaching on pupils’ standards well enough.

The school has appropriate arrangements for measuring individual pupils’ achievement and progress against their targets. Processes for monitoring this and checking the suitability of individual development plans (IDPs) are sound. However, leaders do not use self-evaluation processes comprehensively enough to form a judgement about other aspects, such as pupils’ standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning, and the quality and appropriateness of learning experiences.

Although quality assurance processes have been strengthened since the core inspection, strengthening senior leaders' ability to plan strategically continues to be an area for improvement.

R5. Address the health and safety issues that were raised during the inspection

The school has responded appropriately and fully to the health and safety issues that were raised during the inspection.