



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 following monitoring
Level of follow-up: special measures**

**Ysgol Clywedog
Ruthin Road
Wrexham
LL13 7UB**

Date of visit: March 2015

by

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

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The monitoring team

Tony Sparks	Reporting Inspector
Michelle Gosney	Team Inspector
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Outcome of monitoring

Ysgol Clywedog is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in January 2013.

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

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve standards at key stage 4

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has taken suitable action to improve outcomes for all pupils and particularly for targeted pupils in Year 11. This has resulted in an improvement in pupils' performance in nearly all key indicators in key stage 4. The rate of improvement has been greater than in similar schools in half of those indicators.

The school's performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics had declined in the three years leading up to the core inspection. However, since the inspection, it has improved significantly and it is now closer to the performance of similar schools. There has been a similar rate of improvement in performance in the core subject indicator. In 2014, this indicator improved by 13 percentage points and performance is now slightly below that of similar schools.

Although performance in the level 2 threshold and in the capped points score has improved significantly since 2012, it remains below that of similar schools. Performance in the level 1 threshold also remains below that of similar schools.

Over the last two years, performance in English has improved by 20 percentage points. It is now in line with the performance of similar schools. Over the last four years, performance in mathematics has consistently been better than that of similar schools.

In 2013 and 2014, the gap between the performance of boys and girls in the key indicators reduced. In 2014, the performance of boys improved in nearly every indicator and is very slightly above, or close to the family average for boys, in many of those indicators. Although the performance of girls improved in the majority of indicators in 2014, it remains below that of girls in the family for most of those indicators.

Since the core inspection, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has almost doubled in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics and more than tripled in the level 1 threshold, though both remain below the family average.

Most pupils are resilient and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In many lessons, they make strong progress in developing their skills and understanding of

new principles and concepts. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They work productively in pairs and small groups. However, in a few lessons, where teaching and activities are not sufficiently well planned or challenging, pupils do not make enough progress.

Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of teaching across the school

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching.

The school has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development relating to teaching. In response, the leadership team have implemented a range of effective strategies to improve teaching. There is now an effective, comprehensive and focused programme of training to improve the quality and consistency of teaching.

In many lessons, teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress. In these lessons, teachers have secure subject knowledge and establish positive working relationships with pupils. They use questioning well to probe and extend pupils' learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully to include a variety of activities that develop pupils' skills and subject knowledge progressively. In these lessons, there are high expectations and level of challenge for pupils.

In a few lessons, teachers do not set high enough expectations and conduct the lesson at a slow pace. In addition, these teachers do not use questions effectively enough to probe pupils' understanding.

Recommendation 3: Improve the rigour and robustness of assessment across the school and ensure it informs learning

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has increased the rigour, robustness and consistency of assessment. Over this time, the quality of marking has improved. Nearly all teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular and up-to-date, and conforms to the whole-school approach. Many teachers provide useful diagnostic comments and a majority provide helpful comments about how pupils can improve their work. Even so, a minority of teachers do not provide enough specific guidance on improving subject knowledge and understanding, and the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. In many cases, pupils respond appropriately to the feedback they are given. Pupils regularly undertake useful self-assessment and peer assessment in a majority of subjects.

The school has established an effective and comprehensive system to track the progress of pupils. Teachers record pupils' attainment regularly and this allows leaders at all levels to monitor closely pupils' progress against their targets. Any pupil underperformance is readily identified and there are appropriate follow-up activities to act on the information gained. This is starting to have a positive impact

on the progress of pupils though it is too early to judge the full impact of the strategy.

There are strong procedures to assure the quality of assessment through lesson observations, work scrutiny, line management meetings and performance management objectives. Senior leaders have a well-developed and detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in this area. Middle leaders are held to account appropriately for the quality of assessment in their areas of responsibility.

Recommendation 4: Develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has developed worthwhile planned opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills in most subjects. This is beginning to have a positive impact upon the quality of pupils' work.

Nearly all subjects encourage pupils to produce different types of writing. A few subjects include appropriate writing tasks in their key stage 2 to key stage 3 transition programmes. The school has provided useful staff training and helpful resources to encourage a consistent approach to the teaching of different types of writing. Most teachers regularly mark pupils' work for spelling, punctuation and grammar. A minority provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve the quality of their writing.

A majority of pupils have a secure understanding of the purpose of their writing. However, around half of the pupils do not have a clear sense of audience. As a result, they make incorrect language choices and their writing lacks the appropriate tone. Pupils who have weaker writing skills receive helpful additional support. All key stage 3 pupils receive useful spelling support during form tutor time. Only around half of pupils proofread, edit and redraft their writing effectively. A minority of pupils continue to make too many basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Recommendation 5: Develop the role of middle leaders to ensure that self-evaluation and development planning impact on pupil progress

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has made strong progress in developing the role of middle leaders in self-evaluation and development planning. In many areas, this is impacting well on pupil progress.

Departmental self-evaluation reports include helpful analyses of performance data. Middle leaders now monitor effectively the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They do this systematically through regular and focused book scrutinies and lesson observations. Most have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility.

Departmental improvement plans are linked clearly to the findings of self-evaluation and are presented in a consistent and common format. Most identify suitable actions

to bring about necessary improvement. Many have specific and measurable targets.

Senior leaders challenge and support middle leaders effectively to improve the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning. Most middle leaders fulfil their roles well.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the curriculum at key stage 4 enables pupils to follow appropriate courses that match their ability

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school offers a wide range of appropriate options at key stage 4.

Since the time of the core inspection, the number of courses offered has increased to include a broad range of vocational and general option choices. Effective collaboration with local colleges and other providers has supported these changes.

Pupils in key stage 4 follow courses that are well suited to their ability and interests. Senior leaders interview all Year 9 pupils to ensure that option choices are appropriate to their aspirations and future career plans. Most pupils are able to follow their first choice of courses.

The school introduced these changes to the key stage 4 curriculum in September 2013. It is therefore too early to assess the impact on outcomes.

Recommendation 7: Improve attendance rates and reduce fixed-term exclusions

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school's attendance has improved by over two percentage points. In 2014, attendance was 92.8%. This was just below modelled expectation, and close to the average for similar schools and to the average for the family of schools. The rate of persistent absence has reduced by a third since the time of the inspection. Unverified data indicates that attendance for the current school year to date is higher than at the same point last year.

The school has created a culture where most pupils understand the importance of good attendance. Pupils with high attendance are recognised and rewarded. The school has developed effective systems to identify the reasons for pupils' absence and to contact their parents or carers promptly.

The school monitors the attendance of all groups of pupils carefully. There is a wide range of strategies to support pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is just below the average for the family of schools.

The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen significantly since the 2013 inspection and has been below the national average in each of the last two years. The school makes very effective use of an inclusion room as part of a range of strategies to

ensure good behaviour. Pupils placed in there receive sound support with work matched well to their age and abilities. The school has an effective and wellunderstood code of conduct that sets suitably high expectations regarding pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well during lessons and around the school.

Recommendation 8: Develop the role of the governing body so that all governors can effectively challenge underperformance

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, governors have developed effectively their ability to challenge underperformance. From a wide range of sources, governors have gained a deep and secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They scrutinise performance data thoroughly and know precisely where improvements need to be made. Through regular meetings, visits, links to subject departments, presentations and documents, governors have acquired a detailed understanding about the work of the school. Governors use this information well to challenge the school to improve further.

Recommendation 9: Work with the local authority to reduce the deficit budget

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has worked closely with the local authority to reduce the budget deficit. The approved recovery plan aims to remove the deficit by April 2017. The school has made a number of considerable savings over the last year and is on target to achieve the removal of its deficit. For the financial year 2014-2015, the school has achieved a slightly lower deficit than that planned. However, the school still needs to make substantial savings over the 2015-2016 financial year. There are suitable activities in place to achieve this. A key part of this is the managed staff reduction process in accordance with local authority procedures. The school has met all milestones in this process and any reduction in staffing is based on a suitable curriculum model.

Recommendation 10: Raise standards further in Welsh and address the issues in its provision

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the 2013 core inspection, the school has strengthened the provision for Welsh second language and outcomes have improved considerably.

There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils entered for the full course GCSE Welsh second language since 2012. The figure has risen from just under 5% to 74% in 2014. For the 2015 cohort, take up has increased further and 82% of Year 11 pupils follow the GCSE full course.

There has been a significant increase in the percentage of pupils gaining a level 2 qualification in the full course. This has risen from less than 5% in 2012, to 78% in

2014.

The school continues to take steps to develop the skills of the members of the Welsh department through useful collaboration with a successful department in a partner school.

Since the core inspection, poster displays, bilingual signs, the school Eisteddfod and occasional assemblies have succeeded in increasing pupils' awareness of the Welsh language, history and culture.

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.