Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: Special Measures

St Julian's School
Heather Road
Newport
NP19 7XU

Date of visit: November 2021

by

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

Outcome of visit

St Julian's School 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 the list of schools requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve standards in key stage 3 and key stage 4

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the school's primary focus has been on supporting the wellbeing of its pupils and helping them to settle back into school after periods of lockdown. In addition, the school has continued its work to raise pupils' achievement and develop their skills, independence, and resilience. This has had a positive impact and supported suitable improvements in the standard of pupils' work.

The school has reviewed thoughtfully how it monitors pupils' learning and worked hard to establish a benchmark against which to evaluate future progress. In many lessons, pupils make at least suitable progress. In these lessons, pupils' recall of prior learning is secure, and they apply their knowledge well in new contexts. These pupils settle quickly to their work, show interest and enthusiasm for their learning, and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson. A minority of pupils do not always make enough progress because their recall of prior learning is not secure or because they do not engage with their learning well enough.

The majority of pupils listen respectfully to the teacher and participate successfully in group and pair activities. A few provide thoughtful, reasoned verbal responses when, for example, discussing whether Mary Tudor deserves the title 'Bloody Mary'. Often, the minority who make limited verbal contributions are not secure in their use of subject terminology or do not express themselves clearly enough.

In the majority of cases, pupils use a suitable range of reading strategies to support their learning. They summarise information accurately, use inference to explore and understand, and annotate texts independently as part of thoughtful analyses of sources related to, for example, the Nazi's social, economic, and racial policy. A minority of pupils are not confident in their independent use of reading strategies and are over-reliant upon their teachers.

The writing of the majority of pupils is technically secure. These pupils demonstrate an appropriate sense of audience and purpose when writing in a range of styles, including instructions, explanations and narrative writing. A minority use a varied and suitable vocabulary in well-structured and mature discursive writing on topics such as vivisection and China's one-child policy. A similar proportion do not proof-read their work effectively and continue to make basic spelling and punctuation errors. A few have difficulty structuring and controlling their writing.

The majority of pupils demonstrate suitable number skills in a variety of contexts, such as when using factors to perform challenging calculations involving multiplication. However, a majority of pupils produce inaccurate, poorly constructed

graphs, and only a few use them appropriately to analyse or interpret data. Where pupils are given the opportunity, they provide accurate, extended answers and explain their thought processes and methods well when solving numerical problems.

R2. Improve the co-ordination and planning for progression in developing literacy and numeracy

Leaders have continued to promote successfully the importance of developing pupils' literacy skills in a range of contexts. As a result, pupils now benefit from a variety of worthwhile opportunities to develop these skills across the curriculum. However, since the core inspection, progress in developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum has been too slow.

Leaders have strengthened their approaches to evaluating the quality and impact of the provision for literacy skill. This helps them to identify accurately areas for improvement and determine precisely the requirements for professional learning, Senior leaders have provided helpful strategies and resources for subject leaders and their teams. This has helped teachers plan a range of beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. Most of these strategies help pupils to practise and consolidate their skills whilst improving subject knowledge. In geography for instance, pupils use the '3Ps' of writing successfully to improve their work when writing as a volcanologist to persuade officials to adopt their precautionary plans.

A majority of teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of how to provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their numeracy skills. As a result, they often plan tasks that do not challenge pupils well enough or enable them to develop and improve their skills. Too many of these activities are contrived and do not contribute to pupil progress well enough. The use of graphs, for example, is not planned well enough and there is little requirement for pupils to analyse or interpret data from the graphs. Overall, there is too much variation in how successfully teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills alongside their subject knowledge and understanding.

R3. Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, marking and assessment

Senior leaders have developed a strong vision for teaching that is underpinned by a clear understanding of what successful learning should look like. This has supported suitable improvements in the quality of teaching.

The school provides all staff with a wide range of valuable professional learning opportunities, including research-informed practice. Departments are supported to carry out their own professional learning to ensure that they adopt the most appropriate approaches for their subjects. Staff share effective and emerging practice within and across departments.

Quality assurance processes such as work scrutiny and lesson observations are carried out collaboratively between senior and middle leaders and focus suitably on pupils' learning and progress. This helps leaders at all levels to identify accurately strengths and areas for development in teaching.

In the many lessons where pupils make at least suitable progress, teachers develop productive and positive working relationships with them. These teachers establish clear classroom routines and suitable expectations of the quality of pupils' work.They engage pupils successfully and structure learning carefully to secure their progress.

In the few lessons where teaching is particularly effective and pupils make strong, rapid progress, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do. They use various teaching methods skilfully to maximise pupils' learning, progress and the development of their literacy skills.

There are weaknesses in a minority of lessons. In these lessons, teachers do not always plan well enough to meet the needs of all pupils. In some instances, they provide too much support, and in others too little. As a result, pupils in these lessons do not make the progress they should. Occasionally, teachers' explanations are unclear, or their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This slows the pace of learning and contributes to a lack of engagement and concentration from a few pupils.

Many teachers use a range of helpful approaches, including questioning, to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, teachers' questions often do not probe or deepen pupils' thinking and understanding well enough.

The majority of teachers provide pupils with helpful feedback on their work and, in a minority of cases, ensure they respond well to this feedback to improve their work. However, the quality and consequent impact of written feedback remains too variable. Too often, teachers do not provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work, or address misconceptions and technical errors in written work.

R4. Improve self-evaluation and improvement planning

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school based on the principles of consistency, high expectations and professionalism. These expectations are understood well by most staff and have contributed well to increasing the effectiveness of the school's improvement processes.

Leaders at all levels undertake a wide range of useful self-evaluation activities to gain an accurate understanding of standards, teaching and the development of pupils' skills. This helps them to identify suitable targets for improvement such as pupils' recall of knowledge and their ability to apply this independently in different contexts.

Senior and middle leaders work together to gather first-hand evidence by talking to teachers and pupils about their work and observing lessons. They focus on progress and learning over time rather than in a single lesson. This collaborative approach builds the capacity of middle leaders to evaluate standards and teaching, and plan effectively for improvement.

Leaders also carry out other helpful self-evaluation activities on a regular basis, some of which include external partners. In general, senior and middle leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well. However, the school's evaluation of the impact of the numeracy strategy is too positive.

The strengthening of the school's self-evaluation processes means that governors are now provided with detailed and up-to-date information about standards, skills and teaching. This helps them to hold senior leaders to account more effectively.

R5. Strengthen the role of middle leaders so that they are fully accountable for standards, provision and the quality assurance of the work of their departments

The headteacher has a clear strategy for strengthening leadership at all levels, and his vision for improvement is understood well by most leaders. He has a detailed and precise understanding of the strengths and areas for development of individual leaders. This enables the senior team to provide middle leaders with a careful balance of challenge and support. This has had a positive impact on the effectiveness of middle leadership and has helped to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Line management processes have been strengthened suitably and now focus clearly on pupil progress and wellbeing. Senior leaders challenge underperformance appropriately. Overall, subject leaders have a sound awareness of the strengths and shortcomings in their areas of responsibility. They understand well their role in securing whole-school improvement and plan carefully for further improvement. These leaders have a positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching and the progress that pupils make.

In a few instances, middle leaders have insufficient impact on the quality of teaching and assessment, and the standards that pupils achieve. This is because they do not hold members of their team to account robustly enough to address inconsistencies in classroom practice and written feedback. These leaders do not plan for improvement precisely enough.

Pastoral leaders have developed a beneficial collaborative approach to supporting pupils' wellbeing. They monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour closely and use this information to plan targeted interventions for vulnerable pupils. They are developing suitably in their role as progress leaders.

R6. Meet statutory requirements for the annual report to parents on their child's progress

The school now meets fully the requirement for an annual report to parents on their child's progress.