



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: significant improvement**

**Denbigh High School
Ruthin Road
Denbigh
Denbighshire
LL16 3EX**

Date of visit: June 2013

by

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



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The monitoring team

Rhian Wyn Griffiths	Reporting Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
Denise Wade	Team Inspector
Ceri Jones	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring visit

Denbigh High School 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 school from any further follow-up activity.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards at key stage 4, especially in English and mathematics

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has made steady progress in raising standards at key stage 4, especially in English and mathematics.

In 2012, at key stage 4, pupils' performance in many indicators was higher when compared with the standards they achieved in 2011. The proportion of pupils gaining the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics increased by almost ten percentage points when compared with performance in 2011. This performance is now broadly in line with modelled expectations. The proportion of pupils who achieved a level 2 qualification in English improved by almost twenty percentage points when compared with performance in 2011. This placed the school in the top half of similar schools based on free school meal eligibility. Pupils' performance at level 2 in mathematics improved by almost eight percentage points when compared with performance in 2011. This was broadly in line with the average for the family of schools although placed the school just inside the bottom half of similar schools based on free school meal eligibility. In science, the proportion of pupils gaining a level 2 qualification decreased by almost eight percentage points when compared with performance in 2011. This placed the school in the lowest quarter of similar schools based on free school meal eligibility. Although pupils' performance in the level 2 combined core subject indicator improved slightly when compared with performance in 2011, this also placed the school in the lowest quarter of similar schools. Pupils' performance in the level 1 threshold improved when compared with performance in 2011 and, although lower than the average for the family of schools, this performance was above the average for Wales.

To help raise standards at key stage 4, especially in English and mathematics, the school has initiated a wide range of activities. This includes the introduction of a comprehensive support and revision programme, tailored effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The school has also adopted a more systematic and rigorous approach to target setting, tracking pupils' progress and taking actions more quickly to address underachievement. Where leaders identify underperformance, this is actively challenged and appropriate support provided to help pupils to improve their performance.

In 2013, at key stage 4, the school's unverified data for GCSE English assessments and science and mathematics modules show an upward trend in the proportion of

pupils gaining a level 2 qualification in separate subject assessments or modules when compared with the data in 2012. This unverified data provides the school with a partial indicator of the potential for improved performance in 2013. However, there is still further room for improvement.

Recommendation 2: Improve the standard of spelling and punctuation, and the quality of pupils' writing at length

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the core inspection, teachers now pay increasing attention to improving pupils' literacy skills. As a result, many pupils have made significant improvements in the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation, as well as improving the quality of their extended writing. In many subjects, pupils write in a range of forms and styles and their work shows a sound understanding of the features of different types of writing. Many pupils write extended writing tasks very well, with a secure grasp of the context, purpose and structure.

The school has introduced a range of effective strategies in order to ensure that all departments include the development of pupils' literacy skills as a priority in their development plans and schemes of work. These include regular opportunities for teachers to share good practice with other departments. Many departments now use valuable literacy learning materials to help improve the quality of pupils' writing. Effective literacy focus sessions form part of registration activities. These strategies are being integrated successfully into many departments and have helped to support improvements in pupils' spelling, punctuation and quality of extended writing.

Recommendation 3: Increase the expectations and challenge in teaching to match the best practice in the school

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the core inspection, expectations of what pupils can achieve have increased.

To help increase expectations and challenge in teaching to match best practice, the school has focussed on:

- improving lesson planning to create a stimulating learning environment;
- developing teachers' use of questioning techniques to probe, deepen and extend pupils' understanding; and
- teachers using assessment information effectively to inform lesson planning in order to support and challenge the whole ability range.

In many lessons observed during the monitoring visit, teachers had high expectations of the pupils. This was evident in the level of challenge in the tasks and by teachers encouraging pupils to respond to clear and ambitious success criteria. In these lessons, teachers planned stimulating activities to motivate and engage pupils in order to develop their learning. They also ensured a brisk pace to the lesson, which helped pupils to make rapid progress.

However, in a few lessons, teachers' expectations were not high enough. This was because:

- teachers asked too few questions or their questioning was limited to closed questions and they did not sample the full ability range or particular groups of pupils;
- teachers made overly long presentations, which led to pupils being too passive ;
and
- the pace of the lesson was too slow.

As a result of these shortcomings, pupils did not make enough progress in these lessons. These shortcomings are similar to those identified in the core inspection.

Recommendation 4: Provide pupils with specific comments about how they can improve their work and use assessment information to plan and deliver appropriate activities that meet the needs of all learners

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has successfully implemented a range of activities to provide pupils with specific and better quality comments about how they can improve their work. As a result of sharing good practice and revising the whole-school feedback policy, pupils receive high quality advice in most subject areas. Many teachers now give detailed, helpful written feedback on progress and set out clear and helpful targets for improvement. Most often teachers use the common school guidance of 'what went well' (WWW) and 'even better if' (EBI). This is helping pupils to improve their work and make progress.

The school has given higher priority to meeting the needs and aspirations of all pupils through careful lesson planning. Many teachers use assessment information as part of skilful planning to organise lessons with well-chosen demanding activities in order to develop pupils' understanding across the ability range. Curriculum leaders have worked together to share good practice and produce forms to support effective self and peer assessment in different subjects. This is helping pupils to develop their learning skills well and deepen their understanding of how to improve. Senior leaders monitor the quality of assessment and marking through a programme of book scrutiny, which has also contributed to greater consistency.

Recommendation 5: Improve the consistency of self-evaluation and improvement planning at middle management level

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has started to make progress in improving the consistency of self-evaluation and improvement planning at middle management level.

The school has a calendared programme of useful activities to help ensure a consistent approach to gathering evidence for self-evaluation. All departmental

self-evaluation reports follow a common format and nearly all provide a comprehensive analysis of performance data. Nearly all departmental self-evaluation reports draw appropriately on first hand evidence such as scrutiny of pupils' books. Most of these reports are suitably objective and self-critical. However, since September 2012, subject leaders have not formally observed members of their department teach. This means that they do not always have an accurate understanding of individual teachers' strengths and areas for improvement in order to support further development.

Departmental improvement plans follow a consistent format. Most of these include suitably ambitious targets and appropriate strategies to bring about necessary improvements. This planning has helped lead to significant progress in important areas such as the quality of teachers' marking and pupils' literacy. Many departmental improvement plans link clearly with areas for improvement identified within departmental self-evaluation reports. However, a few do not address all of the areas for improvement identified as a result of departmental self-evaluation. In addition, a few do not plan to address priorities in the school's improvement planning well enough.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that there are associate pupil governors

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Since the core inspection the school has appointed associate pupil governors. These pupils have already made a valuable contribution to governing body meetings. They provide governors with a clear overview of pupils' views about the school and its future. The associate pupil governors also provide useful, regular feed back to the school council.