



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: special measures**

**Heolgerrig Community School
Heolgerrig Road
Heolgerrig
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1SB**

Date of visit: November 2013

by

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

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The monitoring team

Richard Lloyd	Reporting Inspector
Andrew Thorne	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring visit

Heolgerrig Community School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in July 2012.

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 in reading

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The school's most recent reading data shows that nearly all pupils have made improvements in recent months. A majority of pupils now have a reading age that is equal to or above their chronological age.

At the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils read accurately in line with their age and ability. A few pupils that are more able read with fluency and understanding. They discuss texts confidently and maturely. By the end of key stage 2, the majority of pupils read correctly and with expression. A majority of pupils across the school are developing their comprehension skills appropriately, and many are using these skills effectively across areas of learning and subjects.

The school has introduced a number of new initiatives to accelerate improvement in pupils' reading skills. For example, there is a more systematic and structured approach to teaching reading and writing skills from nursery through to Year 4. More than a half of the pupils targeted have made good progress.

The school has taken a number of steps to promote positive attitudes to reading. It has purchased suitable resources for group and guided reading sessions, developed an attractive and well-stocked library area and involved pupils effectively in the process by developing them as reading managers. Daily reading sessions have a greater variety of activities to encourage and sustain pupils' interest in books and in reading. The school has analysed pupils' attitudes to reading through questionnaires. Results confirm that many pupils enjoy reading and express clear preferences for styles of books and authors.

Overall, the school is making clear progress in improving provision to raise standards in reading. However, at the end of key stage 2 at the expected level (level 4), the school is in the bottom 25% when compared to similar schools and too few pupils across the whole school achieve the higher levels.

The school now needs to identify the specific skills that individual pupils need to develop in order to improve their reading, particularly the more able.

Recommendation 2: Secure leadership to provide a more stable environment for pupils and teachers

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The acting headteacher provides stability and very effective strategic direction to the school. She receives extremely good support from the acting deputy headteacher.

Senior leaders have worked diligently to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Effective systems are in place that support and challenge staff to raise standards in teaching and learning and to ensure that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. These systems have a positive impact on pupils. They benefit from a well-organised and engaging learning environment. Many older pupils speak enthusiastically about improvements in the quality of lessons, the level of challenge they receive and pupils' behaviour.

The school has reorganised its staffing structure to ensure that strategic roles and responsibilities are identified and delegated appropriately. As a result, the school has a stronger leadership base. Senior leaders have created a supportive climate in the school, where teachers and support staff feel valued. The school has resolved all longstanding leadership issues.

The governors are very committed to bringing about improvement. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors provide good support and now challenge the school effectively to bring about improvement.

Recommendation 3: Improve curriculum planning to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum and religious education

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Teachers' planning ensures that there is appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum and religious education at key stage 2. There are detailed schemes of work in place that cover the full range of learning experiences across all subjects.

Recommendation 4: Improve planning for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Teachers' planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is consistently good. Pupils' books show many examples of the opportunities they have to apply skills in meaningful contexts. These include extended writing opportunities in historical diary extracts and working out averages within scientific experiments.

The school has suitable arrangements to monitor short term plans and pupils' books to evaluate the provision for skills across the curriculum. It has also devised a useful electronic tracking system to monitor the progress pupils make in developing and applying their literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school.

Overall, cross-curricular work throughout the school is supporting pupils' literacy skills consistently well. However, the level of challenge in cross-curricular numeracy tasks is not always high enough and planning for numeracy across the curriculum does not always build progressively on prior learning experiences.

Recommendation 5: Improve self-evaluation processes in all aspects of the school's work

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has effective arrangements for self-evaluation that have a positive impact on many areas of its work. The headteacher and other senior leaders use a suitable variety of monitoring and evaluation activities that focus well on standards of teaching and learning. The school analyses performance data well to gain a clear understanding of current strengths and areas for improvement, for example by comparing end of key stage teacher assessment results with those of other similar schools. However, evaluation activities do not always identify precisely what teachers and pupils need to do to improve outcomes.

There are strong links between self-evaluation activities and school improvement priorities. Overall, leaders evaluate progress against targets within improvement plans well.

All staff and pupils make valuable contributions to the self-evaluation process, for example through staff meetings and questionnaires. Many older pupils play a particularly significant role in the process. They make considered evaluations of how teaching and learning affects them and identify areas they would like to improve. Teachers have used pupils' evaluations purposefully, for example to develop a more engaging science curriculum. Governors contribute to the self-evaluation process meaningfully. They participate in purposeful learning walks and in monitoring the impact of any changes that occur.

Recommendation 6: Improve the quality and accuracy of assessment

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Arrangements for ensuring the quality and accuracy of teacher assessments are a strong feature of the school's work. In a very short period, the school has made profound changes to systems for assessment, recording and reporting.

The school has a highly effective tracking system that teachers use consistently to record information about pupils' standards and progress. Teachers use this information effectively in the planning process and to identify those pupils who need additional support or challenge. They also use the system to provide comprehensive information about the achievement and progress of individuals or groups of pupils. The school is also making progress in developing a consistent approach to marking pupils' work and developing individual pupil reading profiles.

The school has sound arrangements for ensuring the reliability of teacher assessments. Teachers have spent a considerable amount of time developing their

professional knowledge regarding the standardisation and moderation of pupils' work. As a result, their assessments are an accurate reflection of the standards achieved by pupils. The school has contributed meaningfully to cluster standardisation and moderation activity.

Recommendation 7: Provide better support for short-term, temporary members of staff to ensure continuity and progression in the curriculum for the pupils in their care

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school's staffing arrangements have changed considerably since the original inspection. The school has recently appointed a number of staff on a permanent basis. As a result, the staffing situation at the school is now much more stable than at the time of the original inspection.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.