



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: significant improvement**

**Ysgol Gyfun Aberaeron
South Road
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 0DT**

Date of visit: October 2016

by

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

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The monitoring team

Lowri Jones	Reporting Inspector
Anne Morris	Team Inspector
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Bethan Whittall	Team Inspector
Heledd Thomas	Team Inspector

Outcome of visit

Ysgol Gyfun Aberaeron is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in November 2014.

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

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards in key stage 4

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in 2014, the school's performance in nearly all key indicators in key stage 4 has improved. Provisional data for 2016 represents the school's best ever performance in most of these indicators and shows further progress on the improvements that were seen in 2015.

In the indicator that includes five GCSE grades A*-C including English or Welsh, and mathematics, provisional data for 2016 shows that the school's performance has increased by 16.7 percentage points since the time of the core inspection, and 10.2 percentage points since 2015. Performance in the core subject indicator in 2016 is also significantly higher than in the two previous years.

There has been very little change in the capped points score since the core inspection.

According to provisional data, the school's performance in the level 2 threshold has improved by 10.3 percentage points since 2014. The school's performance in the level 1 threshold has also improved.

In the indicator that includes five GCSEs grades A*-A, the school's performance has declined since the core inspection.

Performance in Welsh at level 2 has improved by 3.8 percentage points since 2014, but is lower than in 2015. Performance in English at level 2 has improved by 11.5 percentage points since the core inspection, but remains lower than in 2013.

In mathematics at level 2, the school's performance has improved by 11.5 percentage points since the core inspection in 2014. Performance in science at level 2 has improved by 24.7 percentage points since 2014, and 13.9 percentage points since 2015.

Since the core inspection, boys' performance has improved in nearly all key indicators in key stage 4. Provisional data for 2016 shows that boys' performance has improved significantly in the indicators that include English and mathematics. However, boys' performance in Welsh has declined. Girls' performance has also improved in most indicators, but to a lesser extent than boys'.

In most lessons, most pupils show strong motivation and are very willing to learn and work. They are very well-behaved and are very supportive of each other.

In many lessons, many pupils make progress that is appropriate for their age and ability. In these lessons, many pupils apply and recall previous learning effectively. They work independently successfully and take responsibility for their own learning. They also work beneficially in pairs and groups. The majority of pupils write fluently and at length, and use subject terminology correctly and appropriately. A few pupils make basic spelling errors. In relevant lessons, many pupils use many number strategies suitably in a variety of contexts. However, in a minority of lessons, only a few pupils make adequate progress and attain the standards that are appropriate for their age and ability.

Since the core inspection, the school has improved and tightened its progress-tracking systems and has introduced a detailed and useful procedure. More coherent and clear arrangements for tracking performance and targeting pupils in the main indicators in key stage 4 have had a positive effect on standards.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen provision for literacy and numeracy skills

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has taken appropriate steps to strengthen provision for literacy and numeracy skills.

Valuable co-operation with local primary schools has given teachers a better understanding of pupils' standards in the skills before they start Year 7. The school has also provided beneficial training in order to help teachers understand how to improve pupils' skills. As a result, departments have revised their schemes of work effectively in order to give more attention to literacy and numeracy. A minority of schemes give pupils rich opportunities to develop their skills. However, in many of the schemes, not enough attention is given to improving pupils' higher order skills.

The school's use of data to track progress in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills has improved. There are now coherent arrangements to support pupils with weak skills, and the school monitors and evaluates these arrangements carefully. The school makes appropriate use of diagnostic analyses of literacy and numeracy tests. As a result, they identify the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils in a timely fashion. A few departments make effective use of this information.

The school has an appropriate policy to make comments on literacy and numeracy when marking. In the best examples, there are useful suggestions for pupils on how they could improve their higher order literacy and numeracy skills. However, this practice is not consistent enough across the subjects.

Despite developments to improve provision for literacy and numeracy, they have not had enough of an effect on pupils' standards in these skills.

Recommendation 3: Develop provision in order to promote the Welsh language more effectively

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has established robust structures that have succeeded in promoting the Welsh language more effectively. The school has appointed an officer to focus specifically on promoting the Welsh language, and this has led to a number of improvements. These include the popular ‘Cymraeg i Bawb’ (Welsh for All) club for pupils, and beneficial support for teachers who lack confidence in using the Welsh language. However, in English-medium lessons, teachers do not make enough use of the Welsh language to promote pupils’ bilingualism.

The school has introduced clear and appropriate arrangements for grouping pupils according to language medium. As a result, the numbers of pupils who study Welsh as a first language have increased significantly. In key stage 4, the number of pupils who study examination subjects through the medium of Welsh has also increased. Over 80% of pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 now study at least three examination subjects through the medium of Welsh. However, pupils can only study a minority of subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Recommendation 4: Improve and ensure consistency in the quality of teaching, and ensure that there is enough challenge for more able pupils

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, leaders have acted effectively in order to improve the quality of teaching across the school and ensure that it is consistent.

The school has strengthened and sharpened its practice on lesson observations and monitoring pupils’ work. Senior leaders and middle leaders now monitor lessons and books regularly, and there are beneficial processes to ensure that judgements are consistent. As a result, senior leaders and many middle leaders have a sound understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement in terms of teaching. However, the quality of lesson evaluations and scrutinising work is not consistent enough and, in a few cases, not enough consideration is given to the progress and standards achieved by pupils.

Since the core inspection, the school has expanded opportunities for teachers to develop their teaching skills. The school has prioritised a few specific areas for improvement appropriately, and has arranged purposeful training on those areas. There are now useful opportunities for teachers to share and learn from good practice within the school and in other schools. Beneficial support and training are given to teachers who underperform and, as a result, the performance of specific teachers has improved.

In many lessons, teachers have sound subject knowledge and a productive working relationship with pupils. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of all pupils and the level of challenge is appropriate. They plan purposefully and use a

variety of useful resources. As a result, there is an effective progression of activities that build beneficially on each other in order to ensure progress. These teachers give clear instructions and check pupils' understanding regularly. Teachers and assistants give valuable support to pupils while circling the classroom. In these lessons, many pupils make strong progress.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan specifically enough in order to ensure that pupils make progress. In these lessons, there is no clear purpose to all activities and there is not enough use of exemplifying work. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding often enough or rigorously enough. For example, effective use is not made of questioning to probe and extend responses, and teachers tend to answer on behalf of pupils. In a very few lessons, teachers do not plan activities that are suitable for pupils' ability and do not give clear instructions.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the role of middle managers by ensuring that they are fully accountable for the standards and quality of teaching in their departments

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the headteacher and the senior management team have introduced effective strategies to strengthen the role of middle managers. This has led to a positive culture among leaders and an agreed aspiration to improve.

The school has defined the nature of leaders' responsibilities and lines of accountability clearly. The performance management system has been strengthened since September 2015 and targets for middle managers are incisive, with a robust link to pupils' standards and the quality of teaching. All middle managers have received relevant training on their strategic role and useful guidelines on aspects of leadership. As a result, leaders have a better understanding of their roles and how to implement them.

In order to ensure increasing accountability, the senior leadership team now monitors the work of middle managers more rigorously. For example, they use findings from scrutinising work and lesson observations to hold middle managers to account more effectively. In addition, there is a regular procedure for line management meetings. They now focus appropriately on standards, setting targets, and teaching and learning, and there is a valuable progression to the identified actions.

There is more consistency in terms of the quality of middle managers' evaluation and planning work in comparison with the time of the core inspection. The majority of them make effective use of data and direct evidence to form a judgement on standards and the quality of teaching in their departments. Minutes of departmental meetings also show that middle managers focus more on appropriate issues such as teaching and learning than in the past. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of these minutes and action points are not always clear.

The role of middle managers has developed valuably to include monitoring pupils' progress. However, this aspect of their role has not been developed in full.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen the rigour of self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes at a departmental level and a whole-school level

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in 2014, the school has taken significant steps to strengthen the rigour of self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes. As a result, whole-school quality assurance processes are robust and comprehensive, and there is improved consistency at departmental level.

The school has sharpened and increased its monitoring and quality assurance processes, and there is now a coherent self-evaluation calendar that includes purposeful activities. The role of leaders in these processes is clear and unambiguous. This procedure ensures that leaders at all levels evaluate standards and provision regularly, and plan for improvement in a timely fashion.

The school has provided purposeful and beneficial training for leaders on the essentials of self-evaluation and planning for improvement. All leaders' understanding of performance data has now been strengthened. Leaders analyse a wide range of data in detail and make useful comparisons of the school's performance against that of similar schools. As a result, the school's evaluation of standards is a more honest and realistic picture than at the time of the core inspection.

The whole-school self-evaluation report is a valuable document that is evaluative, on the whole. The school development plan focuses appropriately on findings from the self-evaluation processes and recommendations from the core inspection. The school now has rigorous arrangements to evaluate progress against aspects of this plan regularly.

Departmental self-evaluation reports now include a rigorous analysis of results. In a majority of cases, there is an accurate evaluation based on a suitable range of evidence. Departmental reviews in their new format provide a detailed and beneficial evaluation of the performance of individual departments. However, in a few cases, leaders do not make sufficient use of direct evidence from lessons and books in order to form a judgement on standards, and teaching and learning.

Most of the departmental improvement plans give due attention to raising pupils' standards and improving the quality of provision. They also reflect whole-school priorities appropriately. Middle leaders evaluate progress against these plans regularly and in detail throughout the year.

The school seeks the views of pupils and parents on a few issues. However, this aspect has not been developed comprehensively. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The implementation board monitors progress against the core inspection's recommendations regularly and sets an appropriate challenge for leaders.

Improvements in the self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes have made an important contribution to raising standards in key stage 4.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school should continue to maintain the level of progress it has already made, and continue to address those inspection recommendations in which further progress is needed.