



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 Bro Helyg  
Rising Sun Industrial Estate  
Blaina  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP13 3JW**

**Date of visit: November 2016**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Kevin Davies	Reporting Inspector
Jonathan Cooper	Team Inspector

## Outcome of visit

Ysgol Bro Helyg is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in March 2015.

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

## Progress since the last inspection

### **Recommendation 1: Raise pupils' standards in reading, writing and numeracy**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils have a sound awareness of an increasing range of writing forms. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many write skilfully across the curriculum, for example when writing instructions on how to care for a baby. They write sensible sentences by following simple and familiar patterns, and punctuate correctly using capital letters, question marks and full stops. Many pupils' spelling skills are developing in line with their age and ability. Many of the more able pupils use adjectives, adverbs and idioms successfully in their work. These pupils are beginning to use more complex punctuation effectively in pieces of extended writing. Most pupils produce legible handwriting and their work is presented well.

In key stage 2, many pupils write in various forms and for different purposes successfully. Pupils are now given suitable opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum, for example by creating a newspaper article to summarise the story of the fire at the Globe theatre as part of their work on William Shakespeare. As a result, the standard of many pupils' written work is developing appropriately. They use a suitable range of vocabulary and phrases correctly, and spell most familiar words correctly. Many pupils are beginning to use short verb forms and mutations suitably in their Welsh work. They are beginning to re-draft their work appropriately by following teachers' feedback. However, their ability to write at length has not yet developed in full. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils achieve to a standard that corresponds to their age and ability.

Pupils across the school are given suitable opportunities to develop their reading skills. Many teachers use a variety of appropriate methods in order to develop these skills, including phonological sessions and guided reading. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils read meaningfully and show an interest in what they are reading. By Year 2, most are able to describe the characteristics of books successfully, including the author, title and cover. They are able to differentiate between fact and fiction, and express an opinion about different characters skilfully. In key stage 2, most pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their reading skills in a variety of forms. By Year 6, many are able to read fairly fluently and develop higher order reading skills successfully.

Most pupils' numeracy skills are developing robustly. In the Foundation Phase, many pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully through a range of relevant activities. They use number facts skilfully to solve numeracy problems in their activities. By

Year 2, more able pupils are able to solve multi-step problems skilfully, for example by adding the total price of objects and giving change from ten pounds. In key stage 2, many pupils' numeracy skills are developing well. They develop relevant strategies and use them to solve real-life problems, for example to calculate a discount in the prices of toys. However, a few pupils' basic skills are uncertain at times, which hinders their ability to calculate using mental and written methods. In Year 6, most pupils are able to apply their skills very successfully in order to solve challenging problems, for example when managing funds to buy furniture for a new house and calculating water and electricity bills.

### **Recommendation 2: Increase pupils' attendance percentages**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has a varied range of effective interventions in order to encourage parents to recognise the importance of sending their children to school regularly and punctually. The attendance policy is useful and explains clearly the school's expectations in relation to notifying about any absence. This important message is given regular attention in the school's newsletters to parents.

The school contacts parents in any cases in which there is no explanation for absence. Teachers identify effectively any pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. The school works very closely with the local authority's welfare officer to monitor patterns of absence. Effective use is made of this information in order to monitor and support pupils who are absent continually. The school follows the education authority's guidelines and sends letters to parents if their children's attendance falls below 96%. Leaders meet with parents where pupils' attendance percentages are a cause for concern, and distribute warning letters if there is no improvement. These arrangements are effective and, as a result, they have a positive effect on pupils' attendance across the school.

The school's arrangements for raising the attendance rates of a cohort of specific pupils who are absent for extended periods are successful. One of the governors has a beneficial overview of the procedures to promote attendance, and challenges the school effectively through regular meetings.

The school's attendance has improved from 94.7% in 2015 to 95.4% at the end of the summer term 2016. This moves the school from the bottom 25% to the upper 50% in comparison with similar schools. Leaders evaluate the work of improving and maintaining attendance regularly. The school's targets for increasing pupils' attendance are challenging in order to ensure that it compares favourably with other schools and more favourably than in the last two years.

### **Recommendation 3: Improve planning for the increasing development of pupils' key skills across the curriculum**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has developed schemes of work to ensure that all pupils are given opportunities to develop their key skills coherently across the curriculum. Planning to

develop literacy skills is effective and has a positive effect on a range of writing experiences and forms for pupils; for example, the scheme of work for spelling and punctuation is beginning to have a positive effect on many pupils' spelling skills. Schemes of work ensure that pupils are given beneficial opportunities to revisit different types of writing regularly in order to develop their literacy skills further.

The school has now distributed the content of the numeracy framework successfully by theme. This ensures appropriate opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills across the curriculum and build on previous learning effectively. As a result, many pupils are beginning to apply their numeracy skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum, for example when working with funding to arrange tickets to watch a drama production.

The school has suitable plans that ensure opportunities to develop pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills coherently across the curriculum. As a result, most pupils develop the skill of communicating through ICT appropriately, for example when presenting information and creating presentations. Pupils have recently been given beneficial opportunities to develop data-handling skills in key stage 2, for example when creating a spreadsheet to compare the features of roller-coasters around the country. The school provides valuable opportunities to enable a few pupils in key stage 2 to develop their role as digital leaders. These pupils conduct workshops with younger pupils in the Foundation Phase, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on standards.

**Recommendation 4: Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school in order to ensure that each child is challenged appropriately**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The senior management team has established a robust programme in order to monitor the quality of teaching across the school. They have observed all teachers teaching and have scrutinised books. Reports that derive from the monitoring work are detailed and, on the whole, leaders give appropriate attention to the effect of teaching on pupils' outcomes. Written reports include due attention to important aspects for improvement. Effective arrangements have been established in order to improve these aspects, which include observing good practice within the school and in other primary schools. This has led to better consistency among teachers in some specific areas, for example in marking and responding to pupils' work. The school is beginning to take advantage of teachers' expertise effectively, for example as they swap to teach literacy and numeracy.

Most teachers plan valuable activities that build on pupils' previous experiences successfully. They have sound subject knowledge and provide stimulating work that maintain most pupils' interest. Most teachers question effectively and have high expectations, which ensures that most pupils are challenged appropriately. However, a few teachers do not always have high enough expectations to challenge and meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.

**Recommendation 5: Improve processes to assess and track pupils' progress, including arrangements to help pupils know how to improve their work**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has thorough procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress. The assessment leader monitors teachers' use of assessment outcomes carefully. As a result, most teachers have a valuable understanding of individuals' attainment and needs. Teachers use an electronic system and class profiles to track pupils' progress across all curriculum subjects effectively. Most teachers use information that derives from assessments effectively to identify specific groups and to plan activities that challenge pupils of all abilities. This is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' outcomes.

Most teachers offer supportive feedback verbally during lessons and use praise regularly to encourage less confident pupils. Most teachers use assessment for learning strategies effectively in order to check whether pupils understand the task's requirements. They share meaningful learning aims with pupils and provide appropriate opportunities for them to discuss and evaluate their work.

Nearly all teachers mark pupils' work in line with the school's marking guidelines and policy. In general, most teachers' written comments enable pupils to know how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to comments by improving and re-drafting their work. However, comments are not always incisive enough to enable pupils to know what to do in order to improve the standard of their work.

The school has developed successful procedures for standardising and moderating pupils' work. Teachers use the information successfully to strengthen their understanding of the standards achieved by each pupil.

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen strategic leadership procedures by ensuring that the roles of all members of staff are defined clearly and that everyone is accountable and co-operates effectively in order to ensure a focus on raising standards**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school's strategic leadership has developed to become more effective by strengthening the role of the senior management team and sharing responsibilities successfully. Following permanent appointments to the leadership team, including a deputy headteacher and leader of literacy and key stage 2, the school's leadership structure is stable. These arrangements are having a positive effect on nearly all aspects of teaching and standards; for example, regular use of assessment for learning methods ensure that many pupils are aware of the expectations of them and what they need to do to improve. In addition, the senior management team has ensured an ethos of effective co-operation among staff with a clear focus on improving provision and raising standards; for example, beneficial arrangements such as joint teaching and observing good practice within the school ensure consistency and improvements in teaching.

The senior management team uses the post-inspection plan as a tool to set a sensible strategic direction for the school. The self-evaluation timetable has a clear focus on the plan's priorities, but is also flexible enough to respond well to any other important areas for improvement when evaluating the school's work. Leaders measure progress against agreed criteria and the outcomes of monitoring work lead to more strategic planning for improvement.

The senior management team's responsibilities are clear and leaders understand their responsibilities and accountability well. They share self-evaluation outcomes effectively with the rest of the staff and other stakeholders. As a result, they are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders are beginning to develop the leadership skills of all members of staff successfully. Through procedures such as monitoring jointly with members of the senior management team, they develop a beneficial understanding of standards in their subjects and offer valuable guidance to other staff.

Staff meetings are regular and structured and focus effectively on raising standards. Clear communication procedures have been established with all staff, and an ethos of co-operation is prominent across the school. Leaders use performance management procedures rigorously to ensure that teachers are accountable for pupils' standards and to challenge underperformance successfully. Valuable support programmes are used to support staff who need support, where appropriate. Leaders use performance management processes effectively with support staff in order to hold them to account for their performance.

### **Recommendation 7: Establish an effective structure for self-evaluation and planning for improvement**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has established a detailed self-evaluation timetable that outlines monitoring activities for each term. It identifies clearly leaders' responsibilities, timescales and effective arrangements for evaluating progress. Leaders ensure the staff's input and ownership successfully and they adapt the timetable as necessary in order to respond to the outcomes of monitoring. This ensures that monitoring activities are specific to address areas for improvement.

Leaders use a wide range of self-evaluation activities that are based on direct evidence, including data analysis, lesson observations, scrutinising books and plans, and speaking with learners. They make appropriate use of the local authority's guidelines and frameworks in order to monitor the standard of teaching of learning. All members of the senior management team are part of the monitoring process and report to staff on the information and evidence that have been gathered. In general, monitoring reports evaluate pupils' outcomes and provision suitably. However, recommendations in reports do not always focus thoroughly enough on pupils' standards. As a result, leaders are not able to measure progress against priorities effectively enough.

Leaders consider the views of stakeholders in the self-evaluation process beneficially. They meet with focus groups of parents regularly in order to seek their

opinion and discuss school improvement issues. Leaders respond well to the feedback; for example, they have improved communication arrangements with parents through effective use of social media to inform them about events. Leaders include the views of staff and the pupils' voice effectively in the self-evaluation process; for example, the school has adapted the way in which it records individual targets after listening to the views of pupils. As a result, many pupils have a sound understanding of their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

The self-evaluation report, although descriptive in parts, gives an up-to-date picture of the school's current situation. Self-evaluation activities feed into this report appropriately. In addition to recommendations from the core inspection, leaders identify additional relevant areas for improvement. They are beginning to include these in an appropriate school development plan in order to continue to guide improvements.

**Recommendation 8: Develop the role of governors in the self-evaluation process in order to enable them to challenge the school appropriately**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The governing body is developing its role effectively. The timetable for meetings is detailed and ensures that governors meet regularly. They receive valuable reports from the headteacher, presentations from members of staff and reports from curricular committees. Most governors have received beneficial training, including training on interpreting data and issues relating to safeguarding pupils. New governors are inducted to the role successfully. As a result, they undertake their new roles and responsibilities quickly.

The chair knows the school especially well. She visits the school regularly and has a very effective understanding of the school's priorities. Under her skilful leadership, the governing body is developing its ability to challenge the school successfully. Governors have completed a self-evaluation report and use the outcomes of this process suitably in order to improve their role.

Many governors undertake monitoring activities, including learning walks around the classrooms. They write comprehensive reports following visits and report back on their findings in meetings. In general, these reports are evaluative and are based on direct evidence. As a result, most governors have a sound awareness of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. This means that they understand well the progress the school is making against the inspection's recommendations.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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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.