



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 Rhydygors
Llansteffan Road
Johnstown
Carmarthenshire
SA31 3NQ**

Date of visit: November 2015

by

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

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The monitoring team

Anthony Mulcahy	Reporting Inspector
Rosemary Lait	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring

Rhydygors school is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in September 2014.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve the quality and quantity of pupils' work generally

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have put in place a range of strategies to improve pupils' standards. These include grouping subjects together into faculties to strengthen the coordination of learning areas and to share best practice.

Most pupils across the school make good progress in developing their numeracy skills and apply these well in subjects across the curriculum. For example, in science they collect, present and analyse data from a variety of experiments. In geography, pupils at key stage 3 use coordinates accurately to locate features on a map.

Nearly all pupils make particularly good progress in developing their ICT skills. They use these skills well across the curriculum. For example, in art, pupils create multimedia presentations including films and animations. In humanities, they use ICT to research topics and improve the presentation of their work.

In science, many pupils use thinking skills well in completing investigations. They predict the outcomes of experiments and analyse findings using appropriate subject specific vocabulary.

However, the school has made less progress in improving standards in English and the development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Improve attendance levels and reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school tracks pupil absence well and works effectively with outside agencies to improve pupils' attendance. The school has put in place a range of useful strategies to improve pupils' engagement with learning. These include introducing subject options at key stage 4, increasing the range of courses available for pupils to choose from and developing nurture provision. These strategies are successful in improving pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Since the core inspection, the number of fixed term exclusions and serious incidents has reduced significantly. In 2014/2015, 120 days were lost to fixed term exclusions. This reduced to 26.5 days in 2014/2015.

There have been similar improvements in pupils' attendance. The unverified attendance figure for 2014/2015 is 92.6%, an increase of 8.6 percentage points from

the time of the last inspection. Leaders have started to collect data on pupil attendance in lessons and have identified pupils who leave lessons on a regular basis. An intervention strategy is in place and its impact is being monitored.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that all lessons meet pupils' individual learning needs

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, staff make better use of a wide range of information, including pupil progress data, to plan activities that meet the individual needs and interests of pupils.

Teachers know the needs of the pupils well. They plan lessons carefully to ensure that all pupils are included and that the pace of learning is appropriate to the needs of each pupil.

Teachers set clear learning objectives and employ an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources that are well matched to the needs and abilities of the majority of pupils. For example, in mathematics, pupils at key stage 4 solve real-life problems such as costing the ingredients for a meal or calculating the amount of value added tax payable on products. In ICT, pupils enjoy making websites and interactive games.

Faculty leaders have started to work together in planning project work to develop pupils' life skills and improve their engagement in learning. However, this is a recent development and it is too early to judge the impact of this on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The school has adapted the curriculum well at key stage 4 to provide learning pathways that match closely the aptitudes and interests of the pupils.

Recommendation 4: Implement consistent marking and feedback procedures

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has reviewed its marking policy and has improved the quality of marking across the school.

All teachers mark work regularly and most provide pupils with constructive comments so pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, not all pupils respond well to this advice. In around half of subjects, pupils have a clear understanding of the National Curriculum level they are working at.

In around half of subjects, teachers plan useful opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work, comment on the achievement of fellow pupils and identify how they can further improve.

Leaders at all levels are involved in the regular scrutiny of pupils' work. They complete a comprehensive record of findings and share these effectively with staff.

They set realistic targets for improvement and monitor these closely. This work is supporting greater consistency in marking and feedback procedures across the school.

Leaders have identified examples of good practice in marking and are modelling these across the school in staff training sessions.

Recommendation 5: Establish a stable leadership team where leaders are held to account for their agreed responsibilities

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Over the last year, leaders carried out a whole school review of the management and staffing structures. They identified areas for improvement and set in place formal arrangements to restructure the school. As part of the new management system, the school appointed four faculty leaders, from within the existing staff, to work alongside senior managers as part of a wider leadership team. These leaders take responsibility for the staff and subjects allocated to their faculty. Their responsibilities include monitoring and evaluating their faculties and managing the performance of staff in their teams. Faculty leaders have responded well to their new responsibilities and are well placed to drive forward school improvement.

The new acting headteacher joined the school in September 2015. Although many changes had already been put in place before her arrival, she has carried them forward effectively and with enthusiasm. She ensures that leaders fulfil their roles and responsibilities appropriately and are accountable to senior managers for the performance of the school.

The chair of governors provides effective challenge and support to the school. He has a clear understanding of the school's strategic objectives, including the importance of maintaining a stable management team to drive school improvement forward.

The local authority is currently reviewing its provision for behaviour support services across the authority. This review includes the strategic role of the school. As a result, the local authority has not appointed a permanent headteacher for the school. This continues to create an element of uncertainty for the school. However, there are overall strengths in leadership and clear strategies in place for the wider leadership team to share responsibility for school improvement.

Recommendation 6: Monitor and evaluate improvement priorities through embedding the recently established self-evaluation procedures

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has developed an effective system to evaluate its work. Through the self-evaluation process, it has identified clear and appropriate priorities for improvement. Its development plan for 2015-2018 identifies specific timescales, staff responsibilities and costings.

Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning well. They observe lessons formally and scrutinise pupils' work on a regular basis. They have developed effective procedures to ensure consistency in how they evaluate this work. They identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning, and set appropriate targets. As a result, pupils' standards and the quality of teaching have improved.

Curriculum leaders carry out thorough analysis of work within their respective subjects and take particular account of pupils' standards. They use the school's electronic data system effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Faculty leaders scrutinise this information to identify areas for improvement within their departments. Their reports provide senior managers with a clear overview of the school's work.

The school seeks pupils' views and responds to their suggestions. For example through the elected school council changes were made to the school uniform. Parents and carers have worthwhile opportunities to share their views both informally and through questionnaires.

Recommendation 7: Deploy staff to make the best use of their time and expertise

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Over the last year, the school has reorganised staffing to ensure that deployment takes suitable account of each individual's expertise. Staff are arranged in faculty teams under a faculty leader who manages their performance. These leaders have subject expertise and a track record of delivering good classroom practice. Their remit is clear and understood by all.

All staff have well-defined subject or role responsibilities that are set out appropriately in new job descriptions. Most teachers deliver lessons in their specialist subject but may also teach other lessons. Senior leaders monitor teaching well through lesson observations and book scrutiny. They have a good overview of the strengths and areas for development within subjects. They identify appropriate areas for improvement and set staff suitable targets. The school provides good opportunities for staff training and development where individuals identify professional development needs through the performance management system.

Teachers have suitable time allocated for preparation, planning and administration.

Recommendations

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