



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 following monitoring
Level of follow-up: significant improvement**

**Alltwen Primary School
Alltwen Hill
Alltwen
Pontardawe
Swansea
SA8 3AB**

Date of visit: December 2014

by

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

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The monitoring team

Jane Mccarthy	Reporting Inspector
Richard Lloyd	Team Inspector
Gwenda Easton	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring visit

Alltwen Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in March 2013.

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

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve pupils' standards in the Foundation Phase, particularly in reading, writing and numeracy

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has started to implement effective systems to improve provision in the Foundation Phase, and these are beginning to improve pupils' standards.

All teachers in all Foundation Phase classes now use a structured system effectively to teach phonics. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' reading. The majority of pupils in the Nursery class now recognise some of the sounds that letters make. In the Reception class, many pupils make good use of their phonic knowledge to blend phonemes to form simple words. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read well. They know how to use the contents page of non-fiction texts and understand the purpose of the glossary. They talk about books with enjoyment and can say what they think will happen next in stories. The more able pupils use a good range of strategies to help them to decode unfamiliar words, including making effective use of their phonic knowledge and working out their meaning from the context of the sentence.

Many pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 write and punctuate simple sentences appropriately. They make good use of their phonic knowledge to spell straightforward words accurately. A few more able pupils are beginning to write extended sentences which use a more extensive vocabulary. However, the writing skills of many pupils remain under-developed.

Many pupils make good progress in their mathematics lessons. By the end of Year 2, many pupils can solve simple word problems well. They make reasonable estimations and measure accurately, for example using centimetres to measure objects in the classroom. Most pupils have appropriate number skills and can add and subtract numbers under 100 efficiently.

The school uses a detailed assessment and tracking system to record the progress that pupils make. Until very recently, teachers' assessments of what pupils can do have not been secure and, as a result, the starting points that leaders use for setting targets have not been accurate. Leaders have recently taken appropriate steps to rectify the situation and nearly all staff now have suitable expectations for pupils' progress. However, it is too early to be able to see the impact of this improved tracking in raising pupils' standards.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that more able pupils achieve the higher levels in end of phase and key stage assessments

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have developed an effective system to group pupils according to their ability, which all teachers use consistently to differentiate their planning. As a result, in many classes, activities take account of pupils' differing needs. However, in a few classes teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve are still not high enough. Teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils in all classes in the Foundation Phase to use their writing and number skills across the curriculum. As a result, too few pupils achieve the higher-than-expected outcome 6 at the end of Foundation Phase.

The school has analysed the National Numeracy test results and identified that pupils do not do well at the questions involving addition and subtraction. As a result, leaders have established a common approach to teaching these skills and all teachers now use these methods. Teachers have adjusted curriculum planning to provide opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in all subject areas throughout key stage 2. However, current plans result in teachers in upper key stage 2 allocating too much time to teaching pupils the easier forms of writing. This means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write in more challenging styles. As a result, they make slower progress with their learning and do not reach the higher than expected levels in their written work.

The school is working well with other local schools to improve provision for more able pupils. For example, a member of staff from the secondary school runs a homework club for pupils to provide additional challenge for identified pupils. Pupils in upper key stage 2 have opportunities to work with pupils who are more able from other schools. This is helping teachers to ensure that pupils are working at a similar level to others within the locality. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work on pupils' standards.

Leaders have recently established appropriate target setting arrangements and agreed expectations of outcomes for all pupils, including the more able. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that too few more able pupils currently achieve the higher levels.

Recommendation 3: Improve pupils' attendance

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has adopted a robust and rigorous approach to absence management. Office staff make first and third day absence calls to parents and the school makes good use of regular support from the education welfare officer. Parents receive regular information about their children's attendance levels. Weekly attendance percentages are visible in every classroom and the school shares these with parents through the school website and social media. Pupils receive rewards for good attendance through regular praise assemblies, certificates and prizes.

Leaders communicate the importance and value of good attendance clearly and consistently to all stakeholders. As a result, attendance improved notably in 2014 from 91.8% to 95.4%, placing the school in the top 25% when compared to similar schools. Attendance levels have continued to improve this term.

Recommendation 4: Develop leadership at all levels

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

There have been significant changes to the senior leadership team during the last year, including the recent appointment of a permanent headteacher. The headteacher and governing body have developed a new senior management team. Together, they provide strong strategic direction to the school's work, and involve all staff well. As a result, staff are well informed and empowered to work together as a team to identify and address the school's priorities.

The development of an effective leadership team has enabled the school to make strong progress in implementing improvement priorities in a relatively short period. They have implemented robust processes to monitor teachers' work and give feedback, in order to secure improvements. Recent successes include the implementation of an effective marking policy, improved arrangements for teaching numeracy and more effective planning for more able pupils. However, these improvements in leadership and provision have not yet had enough of an impact on improving the standards achieved by pupils.

School leaders at all levels have recently become involved in a range of subject related professional learning communities, inside and outside the school. The impact of these is beginning to be seen, for example, in the improvements in reading at Foundation Phase. However, many are in the early stages of development and have not had time to impact fully on the work of the school. Regular well-focused staff meetings and relevant professional development have enabled teachers to improve the quality of their work.

Recommendation 5: Engage governors more fully so that they can support and challenge the school robustly and hold it to account for the standards achieved

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The governing body understands its role in providing strategic leadership, support and challenge to the school. Most governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development well. Recently appointed governors bring valuable skills to the governing body. This is helping them to improve the effectiveness of the challenge they present to the school, for example through improved arrangements to analyse performance data. A few governors regularly attend staff and other meetings with senior leaders and the local authority. These include attendance at whole school reviews of the self-evaluation report, working in groups with staff to discuss and challenge the report and involvement in book scrutiny and moderation of pupils' work. The governing body has monitored the progress of the post inspection action plan rigorously.

Most governors regularly attend relevant training and there is a suitable committee system in place. All meetings have a clear focus and the governing body has recently introduced an annual timetable, which clearly plans and identifies its priorities during the year.

Recommendation 6: Improve self-evaluation procedures by involving all staff and using robust first hand evidence

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders ensure that all staff and governors are involved in the school's self-evaluation processes. Leaders have strengthened existing systems to monitor provision and standards. All teachers and governors now take part in monitoring activities to gather first hand evidence of the school's strengths and areas for development. For example, a recent book scrutiny on marking identified that further training is required on peer and self-assessment. In addition, evaluation of teachers' planning has resulted in a greater focus on skills. As a result of these improved processes, the whole school community has a shared vision for improvement. The self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan are comprehensive and are reviewed and updated frequently.

The school takes good account of data when evaluating its performance. Leaders have used this analysis to improve specific aspects of provision, for example pupils' calculation skills. These processes have had a positive impact on provision, although the impact on standards is less evident.

Recommendation 7: Establish effective performance management procedures

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has clear procedures in place to carry out the effective performance management of all staff. There is an agreed policy and a timetable for the process. Teachers have clear targets that focus on improving pupil outcomes and there are regular, planned opportunities to monitor and review progress towards the targets during the year. This term, school leaders have extended these processes to include managing the performance of support staff.

Lesson observations take place and feedback is appropriate. Planned observations provide good opportunities for teachers to self-evaluate and the recently introduced coaching programme is beginning to enable teachers to share and evaluate teaching across the school effectively. There are good systems in place to support and develop non-teaching staff in the school. Opportunities for all staff to benefit from relevant training and support are used well to support teaching and learning.

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.