

Monitoring

of

**Maes-y-Coed Primary School
Llanwern Road
Maes-y-Coed
Pontypridd
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF 37 1EQ**

School number: 6742130

Date of Section 28 inspection: July 2010

Maes-y-Coed Primary School was inspected in July 2010 and judged as requiring significant improvement. As part of the Welsh Government's requirements for schools requiring significant improvement, Estyn undertook a monitoring visit in September 2011 and a further monitoring visit in April 2012 focusing on the key issues identified in the Section 28 inspection.

Outcome of the monitoring visit

Maes-y-Coed School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection of July 2011. As a result of this progress, 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

R1: raise standards in areas of learning in the Foundation Phase, in subjects across the school where shortcomings are identified and in the use of key skills in cross-curricular contexts

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school is making good progress in addressing shortcomings identified in the Foundation Phase. Most younger pupils work well together, share resources appropriately and show enjoyment in the activities provided. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils show high levels of independence in their learning. These pupils work with minimal supervision, for instance when confidently engaging in writing tasks. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communications skills are developing appropriately across all areas of learning.

Most key stage 2 pupils make good progress in their learning. They apply their improving literacy and numeracy skills effectively to access all areas of the curriculum. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils have good information and communication skills, which they use confidently to enhance their learning and to improve the presentation of their work. Pupils' problem solving and thinking skills are developing well, particularly in upper key stage 2. For example, pupils in Year 5 make very good use of their knowledge of light sources when considering how to depict shadows in their artwork.

R2: improve progress for younger learners and the more able across the school

This recommendation has largely been addressed.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing suitably in the Foundation Phase. Regular drama sessions encourage less confident pupils to speak in large groups. Good quality role-play areas successfully foster pupils' vocabulary and their use of language. As a result, most pupils speak clearly, listen well to adults and other children, and are confident in discussing what they are doing.

The school has worked very hard to make changes in how it teaches pupils in the Foundation Phase to read and write. Teachers plan reading activities regularly. For example, a class of reception and Year 1 pupils enjoys a short reading time each day, which encourages their interest in books. Phonics are taught systematically and pupils with weaker skills are effectively supported through a range of intervention strategies.

The more structured approach to reading and writing in the Foundation Phase is impacting positively upon pupils' standards. Younger pupils, for example, read simple texts accurately, using their phonic skills to identify unknown words, and confidently use emergent writing to write shopping receipts and write their own 'books'. However, the handwriting of these pupils is often over large and presentation a little untidy. Overuse of worksheets with the youngest pupils restricts their ability to experiment with mark making. By the end of the Foundation Phase, more able children read accurately and with expression. These pupils also write lively and imaginative stories, which engage and interest the reader.

The school has a suitable range of strategies to support more able pupils. For example, a group of able Year 1 pupils work alongside pupils of similar ability in Year 2, able writers in key stage 2 attend 'challenge' sessions and able Year 6 pupils receive extension work in mathematics of a high level. All teachers plan activities to extend the skills of more able pupils and in almost all instances such planning provides work with a suitable level of challenge. For example, in Year 6, pupils discuss maturely and sensibly very sensitive issues relating to prejudices in society in a religious education lesson.

Pupils' writing now has high status in the school. All classes have designated writing areas and pupils' written work is celebrated in good quality displays throughout the school. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the more able, has improved

R3: raise the overall level of attendance

This recommendation has partly been addressed.

Pupil attendance is improving steadily. The school has several strategies in place to encourage good attendance, such as the 'Cool Wall', 'Late on the Gate' and certificates for good attendance and punctuality. Parents and carers are contacted swiftly for an explanation if pupils do not arrive at school in the morning.

Since the first monitoring visit in September 2011, the school has introduced a free-breakfast club. This is already having a positive impact on attendance and punctuality. The school is also working closely with the local authority advisory service on a project aimed at addressing issues associated with social and economic disadvantage, which includes encouraging good attendance from certain groups of pupils. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer to target children whose attendance falls below 80% and to improve the attendance of the significant minority whose attendance is between 80% and 90%.

Despite the school's good work in this area, attendance is still below the average when compared with that of similar schools.

R4: improve the consistency of teaching and ensure the effective use of assessment

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Teaching is consistently good across the school. There is a strong sense of mutual respect between staff and pupils. Contributions from pupils are valued and they are encouraged to take risks with their learning.

Nearly all teachers plan well and use a range of interesting resources to cater for the needs of different groups of pupils. All teachers make good use of previous learning to reinforce new concepts and ideas and share learning objectives appropriately. In key stage 2, teachers generally involve pupils effectively in deciding upon the success criteria for the lessons. Nearly all support staff are deployed well and intervene sensitively to extend pupils' learning.

Teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies is developing steadily. Teachers encourage pupils to assess their own progress and that of their peers by using simple systems such as smiley faces, thumb-up or traffic lights. Older pupils occasionally assess their own work and that of others. At the end of key stage 2, pupils are starting to use techniques such as 'diamond ranking' to develop their thinking skills.

Individual pupil target setting is in place in all classes. However, targets are too general and are not changed and/or adapted regularly. As a result, they are not as effective as they should be in helping to move pupils forward.

Overall, the school is making good use of data to track pupil progress and measure the success of its intervention strategies. The new electronic tracking system is

already helping the school to identify quickly and efficiently individuals and groups of learners who are underachieving and to put intervention strategies in place.

During the autumn term, the school completed reading tests on all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and on-entry assessments on pupils in lower Foundation Phase classes. The information from these assessments was used effectively to target individual pupils for additional support, including helping more able pupils to achieve as well as they should. During the spring term, pupils were re-tested and data shows that most targeted pupils made at least good progress.

R5: improve curricular planning to ensure appropriate progression in skills based learning across the school

This recommendation has been fully addressed

The school has skills and planning co-ordinators. These co-ordinators have worked with staff to ensure progression in skills and consistency in the planning for skills. As a result, most staff have a better understanding of the requirements of a skills-based curriculum. Since the inspection, teachers' short term planning has improved significantly with suitable opportunities to develop key skills clearly identified. Long-term skills planning is now in place to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school. Teachers monitor and record appropriately the coverage of skills in lessons and this helps to identify gaps in pupils' experiences.

R6: provide clear strategic leadership, establish effective managerial systems, including the roles of senior staff, and empower subject leaders

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

There is now greater stability in the senior leadership of the school. The acting headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in the autumn term and a new deputy headteacher appointed in April of this year. Curriculum and subject co-ordinators have a clearer understanding of their roles. They have developed appropriate methods of working and sharing expertise across all phases in the school. The relatively new senior leadership team has a common vision and purpose and is strongly committed to bringing about the necessary improvements. It has provided good support for the headteacher on a day-to-day basis and has been instrumental in initiating and supporting new initiatives, such as the school's focus on writing areas in classes. However, the new leadership team does not yet act strategically enough in planning for the longer term.

Leaders are responding positively to their new roles. They are beginning to use information about the school's strengths and areas for improvement to identify actions beyond those of the recommendations from the last inspection.

R7: establish effective self-evaluation procedures, identify key priorities and actions and rigorously monitor outcomes

This recommendation has largely been addressed.

All staff now contribute to self-evaluation and understand its importance in school improvement. A range of suitable self-evaluation processes are in place, including the monitoring of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' books and classroom observations. As a result, staff and leaders have a good understanding of the school's progress in meeting the recommendations from the inspection of 2010.

Leaders have a better understanding of the close links between effective strategic leadership and high standards. They are beginning to prioritise the needs of the school and its pupils more effectively and are appropriately evaluating the impact of actions and improvements on standards.

Monthly meetings between the headteacher and governors and regular visits into school by governors ensure that governors are well informed and knowledgeable about the school's progress and are well placed to act as 'critical friends'.

R8: ensure the efficient and effective use of resources to improve quality and standards; and provide sufficient contact time in key stage 2

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has implemented a range of new initiatives to improve provision, which are impacting positively upon pupils' standards. It has invested heavily in resources for information and communications technology and all classrooms now have interactive whiteboards, which are used effectively to enhance learning. Library provision for key stage 2 pupils has improved and outdoor learning areas are developing well. All staff have undertaken relevant training and have visited other schools to improve their expertise. Classes have been re-organised and staff deployed to make the best use of their skills and expertise.

The key stage 2 timetable has been adjusted to provide sufficient contact time to meet Welsh Government recommendations.

Recommendations for improvement

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the school needs to:

- R1 continue to implement strategies that focus on improving pupils' early reading and writing skills in the Foundation Phase;
- R2 improve individual pupil target setting and the use of assessment for learning;
- R3 continue to improve pupil attendance; and
- R4 make better use of self-evaluation to identify the school's own key priorities for improvement and to plan more strategically.