



*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 of visit  
Level of follow-up: special measures**

**Gwaunfarren Primary School  
Alexandra Avenue  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 9AF**

**Date of visit: June 2013**

**by**

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



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**The monitoring team**

Fiona Arnison	Reporting Inspector
Barry Norris	Team Inspector

## **Outcome of monitoring visit**

Gwaunfarren Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in December 2011.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any further follow-up activity.

## **Progress since the last inspection**

### **Recommendation 1: Raise standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and numeracy**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

In 2012, outcomes in the Foundation Phase were relatively weak in language, literacy and communication and in mathematical development.

The introduction of designated phonic sessions and a structured commercial scheme to develop pupils' English skills has improved pupils' standards of reading and writing across the school. Most pupils make good and sometimes very good progress on catch-up and reading intervention programmes. As a result, there are far fewer pupils requiring targeted intervention for reading by the end of Year 2. Pupils in Year 2, with few exceptions, now have reading ages at, close to or above their chronological ages. More able pupils in Year 2 are confident writers and can develop and structure their ideas through extended writing. However, they do not always spell familiar words or use basic punctuation correctly and their range of sentence structures and vocabulary is not extensive enough.

Many pupils in the Foundation Phase are developing confidence in their use of numeracy skills and apply them well in mathematics lessons, especially in mental mathematics. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of number facts and operations is developing well, but their work in shape, space and measure is weaker. Overall, opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum are at an early stage of development, especially in areas such as geography and science.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels and resolve the difficulties and uncertainties surrounding the long-term senior leadership of the school**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

In addition to the appointment of a substantive headteacher in October 2012, the governing body appointed the acting assistant headteacher to the position of deputy headteacher in January 2013. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, together with the governing body, have a clear vision for the school and have effective,

detailed plans in place to improve pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching.

The senior management team works collaboratively and has a clear focus on school improvement issues. It holds regular meetings, which address areas of the post inspection action plan appropriately and have a clear focus on improving standards. Senior managers disseminate decisions well in staff meetings. This has helped to develop a shared understanding of the need to improve pupil outcomes and has resulted in a more consistent approach to assessment and teaching.

Teachers with additional responsibilities have clear job descriptions and have received appropriate training to carry out their role. They now have a good awareness of how to use data effectively to analyse performance and set targets for improvement. They have taken part in lesson observations and work scrutiny. Their judgements are generally accurate and help to identify key areas for improvement.

All staff have taken part in suitable professional development activities to further their understanding of the role of the subject coordinator. They are beginning to keep link governors well informed about how the school is improving standards and provision in their curriculum areas.

The governing body receives enough relevant information about the school's performance and has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities. It is fully involved in the implementation of the post inspection action plan and offers a good level of challenge to the school.

### **Recommendation 3: Establish a rigorous and widely shared system of self-evaluation and use this to inform planning for improvement**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school's self-evaluation systems and processes are now well established. Senior and middle leaders take part in regular monitoring activities based on a wide range of first-hand evidence of teaching and learning. There are useful evaluations to gauge the progress and impact of initiatives, for example those linked to literacy and assessment for learning. There is careful analysis of a wide range of data on the performance of pupils. Staff and governors understand the data well. Governors have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and challenge the leadership of the school appropriately.

The self-evaluation report is evaluative and more sharply focused on pupil outcomes. Its findings inform the school development plan well. There is effective planning in place to take the school forward beyond the scope of its post-inspection action plan. A suitably wide range of staff undertake lesson observations across the school to support the school's development. The lesson observations focus well on teaching and pupil engagement and set out strengths and areas for development clearly. However, on occasions they do not focus enough on standards and sometimes over-rate features that constitute a good, rather than an excellent, lesson.

**Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of all teaching across the school to that of the best**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The monitoring of teaching carried out by senior leaders and observations during the Estyn's visits indicate a steady improvement in the overall quality of teaching. In most lessons, teaching is now good or better. All teachers continue to benefit from a regular monitoring programme, resulting in advice and support from senior leaders. In the most helpful feedback, leaders focus sharply on improving outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders and the governing body have established robust systems to address any underperformance identified.

All teachers use a good range of strategies, such as talking partners and group work to engage pupils in their learning. They ask questions that encourage pupils to think for themselves, for example asking pupils to justify and explain their answers. Classrooms are well organised to promote pupils' independent learning. Raised teacher expectations ensure that all pupils make at least steady, and in some cases rapid, progress.

Subject leaders have devised a systematic plan to ensure pupils build their skills progressively as they move from class to class. However, this work is at an early stage of implementation and has yet to impact fully on improved outcomes for pupils.

There is a strong sense of teamwork between teachers and support staff. Teachers from different classes plan collaboratively to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. All staff make effective use of consistent positive behaviour strategies. This helps to promote a calm and purposeful working environment throughout the school.

**Recommendation 5: Develop accurate and useful pupil assessment systems**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

All teachers follow the school marking policy and inform pupils if they have or have not achieved agreed learning objectives. They mark pupils' work diligently and generally give helpful, well-focused comments to enable pupils to improve, particularly in English. In the best examples, pupils respond to these comments and use them effectively to produce better work. Most teachers encourage pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers. In a few lessons, pupils provide each other with helpful guidance and advice on how best to improve.

All teachers input relevant assessment information weekly into an electronic system. This informs their short-term planning, class organisation and identifies more able pupils and those pupils in need of intervention or catch-up programmes. As a result, teachers match learning objectives and tasks closely to pupils' abilities to ensure that tasks are meaningful and challenging.

Teachers are becoming more accurate in assessing pupils' work against the broad National Curriculum level descriptors. The moderation of pupils' work at school and

cluster level is at an early stage of development. Recent improvements to standards in writing across the different subject areas mean that teachers now consider a wider range of work to support their judgements, especially for Foundation Phase pupils achieving above the expected outcome (outcome 6). Senior Leaders have identified in their monitoring procedures that teachers' assessments do not currently take enough account of how effectively pupils use and apply their numeracy skills in different subjects.

### **Recommendation 6: Improve safeguarding policy and procedures**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has updated its safeguarding policy appropriately.

All staff have received training and the named person with responsibility for safeguarding person has attended the local authority extended training. All staff are aware of the updated policy and procedures and know how to act in accordance with these procedures in the event of a disclosure by pupils.

Toilets are now accessible without pupils having to leave the main building.

There are appropriate arrangements for girls to be able to change in privacy for physical education.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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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.