



*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**

**Irfon Valley C.P. School  
Garth  
Llangamarch Wells  
Powys  
LD4 4AT**

**Date of visit: November 2014**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Fiona Arnison	Reporting Inspector
Gwenda Easton	Team Inspector

## Outcome of monitoring visit

Irfon Valley Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in October 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: Raise standards of pupils' skills in writing, numeracy and Welsh in key stage 2**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Standards in all three aspects of this recommendation have improved since the last inspection.

Pupils' skills in writing have improved and most pupils are currently producing a consistent standard in writing across all areas of the curriculum. They are aware of a wide range of genres and know what steps to take to improve their writing. Across key stage 2, many pupils use a good variety of sentence structures, linking them together coherently. By Year 6, many pupils are developing the ability to use paragraphs effectively.

Pupils' numeracy skills are improving and pupils now have regular opportunities for problem solving and applying mathematical skills across the curriculum. Leaders have completed a detailed analysis of the national tests in order to identify specific shortcomings in pupils' understanding. These areas are incorporated into teachers' weekly planning. This has had a positive impact on improving standards, for example in pupils' understanding of money. Pupils use their numeracy skills well across the curriculum. Leaders monitor the frequency and coverage of these skills appropriately.

Pupils now make good progress in Welsh as a second language. Most pupils and staff use spoken Welsh very confidently throughout the school day. Following her recent sabbatical, the Foundation Phase teacher has introduced a system to encourage pupils of all ages to play new games through the medium of Welsh during playtimes. This approach is having a positive impact on standards of Welsh across the school. Most pupils in key stage 2 are building well on Welsh skills gained in the Foundation Phase. Standards at the end of key stage 2 in Welsh second language are significantly improved.

All key stage 2 pupils achieved the core subject indicator in 2014. When compared with that of similar schools, pupils' performance at the expected level placed the school in the top quartile for English and mathematics. However, too few pupils achieved the higher-than-expected levels in English or mathematics. Inspector's analysis confirms a close correlation between teacher assessment and national test results.

## **Recommendation 2: Improve the performance of more able pupils in mathematics at the end of Foundation Phase and key stage 2**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Teachers' planning in mathematics now has clear learning intentions which are closely linked to the national curriculum levels. As a result, there are more opportunities for pupils to attain higher standards. The school now identifies more able pupils in mathematics, and supports these pupils to work with older classes. This has had a positive early impact on improving standards. Although leaders acknowledge that too few pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 achieved the higher-than-expected levels in mathematics in 2014, school tracking and the work in pupils' books indicates that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve these levels in the future.

In the Foundation Phase, the introduction of a new visual counting resource has improved pupils' understanding of number facts. Many pupils in Year 2 are now confident with working with numbers up to 20 and a few are working with numbers to 100. Differentiation at this early stage ensures that pupils are working at a level that is appropriate to their ability. Regular provision of problem-solving activities enables pupils to apply their understanding of mathematical concepts to solve everyday problems and has had a positive impact on standards in the Foundation Phase.

In key stage 2, teachers provide good opportunities for most pupils to develop their number skills at a level that is appropriate to their ability. As a result, they are gaining a firm understanding of the four rules. Leaders have correctly identified where pupils' understanding of the more challenging aspects of mathematics require further development, for example in rotational symmetry or reflection in all four quadrants, and have robust plans to address the shortcomings.

The introduction of a recently acquired commercial mathematics scheme allows pupils to decide on the level of work that is appropriate to their ability. During lessons, teachers provide appropriate challenges for the more able pupils to enhance and develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. However, this level of challenge is not consistently evident in pupils' book over time, especially in upper key stage 2.

## **Recommendation 3: Improve the level of challenge in lessons in key stage 2, especially for more able pupils**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have improved the school's curriculum so that it engages and challenges pupils of all abilities. As a result, behaviour has improved and low level disruption is rare. Pupils make good use of a wide range of resources to support their independent learning, and are beginning to make decisions, for example about how to present their work. They take responsibility for aspects of their learning, for example during the recently initiated enterprise week.

Teachers have agreed procedures to ensure consistency in planning, and these are beginning to ensure that the level of challenge in lessons is suitably matched to pupils' starting points. Regular assessments and written observations of what pupils can do help to ensure that, in many lessons, planning caters appropriately for the next steps in pupils' learning. The recently appointed co-ordinator for more-able pupils has supported teachers to devise challenging tasks beyond the classroom, for example in writing the school magazine.

In many lessons, teachers have raised their expectations of what more able pupils can achieve. For example, teachers have worked to improve pupils' oracy skills by routinely modelling subject specific and technical vocabulary. In writing, teachers encourage pupils to develop their ideas to form cohesive paragraphs. Recent writing in pupils' books provides more able pupils with sufficient opportunities to extend their learning and attain higher levels. In a few instances, for example in mathematics, a minority of pupils make less rapid progress, because teachers have to spend time consolidating basic numeracy skills. On occasions, teachers allow quieter pupils to become passive, rather than active participants, during lessons. As a result, these pupils make slower progress than their peers.

It is still too early to see the full impact of teachers' recently raised aspirations in an increased proportion of pupils achieving the higher-than-expected outcomes at the end of each key stage.

**Recommendation 4: Develop clear systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning accurately and effectively**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have devised a formal and rigorous approach to monitoring which has resulted in clear improvements to provision and, as a result, to outcomes for pupils. The cycle is systematic and regular, although it has only recently included leaders at different levels. Leaders now take appropriate action to share the findings of their monitoring formally with other staff. Where monitoring identifies shortcomings, leaders have begun to respond with suitable pace and urgency. This has improved accountability. In addition, it has strengthened subject leaders' knowledge of the standards pupils achieve, and is beginning to ensure that teachers' expectations and procedures are consistent across the school.

All leaders now receive suitable dedicated leadership time, which enables them to undertake their monitoring roles appropriately. The head and staff have visited other schools to observe good practice. As a result, all staff have a clear, shared understanding of what constitutes high quality teaching and learning, and aspire to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve further.

**Recommendation 5: Develop systems and strategies to enable the governing body to hold the school to account more rigorously**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The governing body has established clear systems and procedures which enable governors to fulfil their role better. As a result, they hold the school's leaders to account more fully for the standards achieved. Governors are now more directly involved in the school's self-evaluation procedures and school improvement planning. They visit school regularly, and their visits have a clear focus and culminate in a written report. As a result of their monitoring activities, governors are beginning to ask pertinent questions to further their own understanding about the standards that pupils achieve and the provision that they receive.

Governors are gaining the confidence to challenge the headteacher and other leaders appropriately. More recently, they have scrutinised examples of pupils' work in order to evaluate first hand evidence of the progress that pupils make.

As part of their work towards a national award, governors have devised terms of reference for their restructured committees. Governors hold purposeful, full governing body meetings with appropriate agendas and recorded outcomes. They have audited the existing governing body's skillset, and have actively sought new governors with complementary skills to fill any vacancies that arise. Recently, they have devised a detailed induction procedure to ensure that new members quickly gain a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

**Recommendation 6: Ensure that acts of collective worship comply with statutory requirements**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Leaders have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that the school complies fully with the statutory requirements for collective worship. School records, alongside governor and local authority monitoring, show that planned acts of worship take place regularly.

During the monitoring visit, collective worship led by the headteacher was well structured, with relevant and engaging content. All pupils behaved well, listened appropriately and took part enthusiastically in responding to questions. During the period of reflection, all pupils were respectfully silent. Many chose to participate in personal reflection or prayer. The content of the collective worship supported pupils' spiritual development well, and gave meaningful opportunities for pupils to contemplate the wonder of the earth, planets and space.

<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.