



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**

**Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School
Merthyr Dyfan Road
Barry
CF62 9YQ**

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by

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

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Outcome of monitoring

Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

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, particularly in those areas where there is relative underperformance, including English and mathematics at key stage 3

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in 2012, the school has implemented an appropriate range of strategies to improve standards and address relative underperformance. Following the core inspection, the school improved in all indicators in key stage 3 and in most indicators in key stage 4. However, the school did not respond swiftly enough to the recommendations and was unable to sustain these improvements, particularly in key stage 4. Overall, since the core inspection, performance at key stage 4 has been variable. Since the appointment of a new headteacher, the school has taken a more focused approach to addressing the recommendations. Sustained improvements in teaching and assessment are now having a valuable impact on standards in lessons and, over the last two years, in the majority of indicators at key stage 4.

In lessons, the majority of pupils make good progress. Many pupils recall prior learning well and the majority demonstrate confidence and assurance when applying this to new contexts. For example, in drama, pupils draw on their knowledge of dramatic conventions and apply them well to their work on pantomime. Nearly all pupils are ready to learn at the start of lessons and settle quickly to tasks. A minority of pupils demonstrate effective independent learning skills. In these instances, pupils make valuable contributions to group tasks, express their own ideas confidently and support each other well. However, a minority of pupils do not make as much progress as they should. They do not engage confidently in discussions or challenge themselves to improve their work. A few lack concentration and resilience and a very few do not engage appropriately in lessons.

Nearly all pupils listen to teachers and one another with attention and respect. The majority express their ideas well and use subject specific terms confidently when responding to questions. For example, in science, pupils use a range of scientific terms appropriately to discuss the categories of different species of animals. However, a minority of pupils do not extend their oral responses sufficiently and a few do not develop their own ideas but repeat those of others.

Most pupils read aloud confidently. They engage enthusiastically in reading opportunities, such as the 'Drop Everything and Read' initiative. Most pupils extract key pieces of information from a range of sources confidently. For example, in mathematics, pupils identify useful information from questions, tables, charts and

diagrams to help them solve problems. Many infer meaning from texts appropriately, although a minority do not use inference well enough to develop a deeper understanding of texts. The majority of pupils identify different writing techniques confidently. For instance, in English, pupils explain appropriately how an author uses the technique of foreshadowing to provide a warning or indication of a future event.

Nearly all pupils sustain writing at length well. Many produce writing that is technically secure and well structured. They write well for a suitable range of purposes, and adapt their language and tone appropriately. A minority produce thoughtful and wellcrafted extended writing. For example, in history, pupils present persuasive arguments and counter-arguments about who was to blame for the Carpathia Steamship disaster. The writing of a few pupils is assured, sophisticated, detailed and thoughtful. However, a minority of pupils make regular spelling and punctuation errors, and do not structure or vary their writing well enough to engage the reader.

Many pupils develop suitable numeracy skills in mathematics. They use basic number skills well to solve real life problems. The majority of pupils develop and apply these skills suitably in a few subjects across the curriculum. For example, pupils calculate the range of options available on a restaurant menu or complete graphs based on traffic surveys. However, a few pupils have weak numeracy skills and make basic errors in calculation and reasoning.

In 2017, at key stage 4 in the majority of indicators, the school's performance compares favourably with that of similar schools. However, in a minority of indicators, performance has been below that of similar schools for the last three years. Despite a slight decline in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics in 2017, performance is in line with expectations for the first time in the last three years and broadly in line with that of similar schools. Performance in the capped points score has improved since the core inspection and, in 2017, compares favourably to that in similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSEs at A*-A or equivalent improved in 2017 but remains below levels in similar schools. The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved since the core inspection and now compares well to that of this group of pupils in similar schools in many indicators. In 2017, the performance of girls is lower than that of girls in similar schools in the majority of indicators.

At key stage 3, performance in the core subject indicator and in English and mathematics at level 5 and above has improved since the core inspection. This performance compares consistently well with that of similar schools.

Recommendation 2: Increase the proportion of excellent and good teaching

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented a broad range of strategies that are contributing effectively to improving the quality of teaching. This includes worthwhile professional learning as well as valuable mentoring and individual support for staff. This has established a culture of accountability and self-reflection amongst teachers that focuses appropriately on the development and sharing of good

teaching practice. While these strategies have not impacted fully on outcomes at the end of key stage 4, they have led to improvements in the quality and consistency of various aspects of teaching, such as effective planning, the inclusion of valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and the provision of useful verbal feedback.

Nearly all teachers foster constructive working relationships with pupils. They possess strong subject knowledge and are valuable language models. Most teachers manage behaviour well, ensure that pupils settle in lessons, and engage pupils quickly in their learning. In many lessons, teachers plan a range of beneficial opportunities that build well on pupils' prior learning. In these lessons, teachers have suitably high expectations of pupils and consolidate pupils' learning effectively during the lesson. In a majority of lessons, teachers use challenging activities that are well matched to individual pupils' ability. For example, in science, pupils of all abilities work well together to investigate and extend their knowledge about the refraction of light and its relationship to the density of different materials.

Many teachers plan lessons that provide a range of valuable activities that help pupils develop their independent learning skills. However, in a few instances the pace of learning does not allow students to acquire suitable depth in their knowledge, nor to develop their understanding fully.

In most lessons, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to read aloud. The majority of teachers develop successfully pupils' use of relevant subject specific vocabulary. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not reinforce pupils' use of a wide range of language and vocabulary well enough.

Most teachers monitor progress of individual pupils well in lessons. They provide useful verbal feedback that helps them improve their work. For example, in music and history, teachers use digital QR codes to provide valuable verbal feedback to pupils. Nearly all teachers question pupils appropriately to test their recall of prior learning. The majority of teachers use effective questioning to encourage pupils to extend their responses and develop their understanding valuably.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that there is a consistent and systematic whole-school approach to improving pupils' literacy skills

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has improved its approach to developing pupils' literacy skills. It has developed suitably its provision for the development of pupils' writing. Quality assurance arrangements that focus on the accuracy of assessment help to ensure that there is a shared understanding across the school of the features of effective writing. This has contributed to improvements in the range of vocabulary that pupils use in their writing, as well as its structure and technical accuracy.

Pupils have useful opportunities in form time to develop their reading skills and to read for pleasure. Opportunities to 'drop everything and read' engage pupils productively with this approach. This has increased the number of pupils who read in school and at home and has contributed well to improved comprehension skills.

However, overall the school does not focus well enough on higher-order reading skills, for example to enable pupils to evaluate and analyse confidently at key stage 3.

In 2017, the school provided helpful training to a minority of teachers on how to provide structured teaching activities to develop pupils' oracy. Many teachers have a secure understanding of what they should strive for when encouraging pupils to respond to questions and discussions in class. This has contributed appropriately to improving the quality of pupils' verbal responses. In addition, a few departments are beginning to enhance provision to further develop effective oracy in their areas. For example, the music department uses technology in innovative ways to provide high quality feedback on pupils' speaking and listening skills.

The school has a secure understanding of pupils' reading and spelling abilities based on a range of evidence and uses this information to plan appropriately for a broad range of interventions. Pupils who engage with interventions to improve their literacy make sound progress. This information is also used appropriately to develop suitable curriculum provision in English.

Leaders are beginning to use information from self-evaluation appropriately to assess the quality of their provision. However, planning does not provide well enough for the progressive development of pupils' oracy or reading skills in a wide enough range of appropriate curricular contexts.

Recommendation 4: Improve consistency in the quality of marking so that pupils receive clear advice that helps them improve

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented effective strategies to improve the consistency and quality of assessment and feedback.

Most teachers provide useful written feedback to help pupils make progress. Many of them make beneficial use of success criteria and intended learning outcomes to monitor pupil progress in lessons and over time. They annotate pupils' written work helpfully and provide valuable feedback on the quality of their writing. However, a few teachers do not provide clear enough guidance on how pupils can improve their work or do not focus closely enough on the technical accuracy of pupils' writing.

Many pupils respond well to advice on how to improve their work. For instance, in history, when asked by teachers to provide more information on Henry VIII, pupils produce well-structured paragraphs that compare his reign to that of other monarchs. However, a few pupils do not respond effectively to such advice. They produce brief comments or fail to complete missing work when asked to do so by teachers.

Senior leaders consistently undertake thorough work scrutiny activities and lesson observations to monitor the use of feedback. This process enables senior leaders to support individual teachers to improve their practice or to identify shortcomings in feedback within or across departments. In this way, the school has systematically

improved the quality and consistency of feedback so that it has a positive impact on the standards achieved in lessons and books.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the quality of improvement planning to ensure plans link closely with the findings of self-evaluation and include clear targets for improvement

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher. Through a period of uncertainty and change, the school has worked well to strengthen its arrangements for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. This has led to improvements in provision, most notably in improving teaching and assessment. It has established a clear, well-understood cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities that ensures that staff are fully aware of their role in self-evaluation and able to set clear targets for improvement based on their findings. These activities are supported well by clear guidance, support and training.

The school's self-evaluation processes draw suitably on a wide range of evidence, including performance data, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of pupils and parents. This enables leaders to identify appropriate areas for development and to put in place useful plans to bring about improvements. However, in a very few cases, priorities identified through whole school self-evaluation activities are not addressed well enough in improvement planning.

Senior and middle leaders engage in systematic and robust processes to monitor improvements and ongoing areas for development. The senior leadership team meet weekly to scrutinise progress against inspection recommendations. Line managers meet with heads of department fortnightly to hold them to account for actions identified in their departmental improvement plans. In addition, the school improvement forum meets half-termly and provides suitable challenge and support to monitor progress against core inspection recommendations.

Departmental improvement planning is linked closely to the core inspection recommendations and includes suitable actions to address the areas identified. However, planning for improvement in wider areas of the schools' work is more limited and a few areas for development identified through self-evaluation are not clearly addressed in improvement plans. In addition, planning for improvement has not had a consistent enough impact on raising standards at key stage 4.

Governors fulfil a valuable role in self-evaluation and improvement planning. They provide robust challenge to senior leaders when monitoring progress against improvement priorities.

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.