**Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: special measures**

**Llanbister C.P. School
Llanbister
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 6TN**

Date of visit: January 2018

by

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

Outcome of monitoring

Llanbister Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in January 2015.

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

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve standards in ICT, particularly in key stage 2 and pupils' independent writing skills in the foundation phase

In the foundation phase, many pupils use a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills with confidence. For example, they combine simple graphics and words to create accurate stories about known fairy tale characters. They use a variety of software confidently to consolidate their spelling and numeracy skills. In key stage 2, most pupils create suitable presentations and use word processing programs to create attractive posters and fact files. They save and retrieve information confidently. Nearly all pupils use ICT appropriately in their work across the curriculum. For example, they research and present accurate information about different places to visit in Wales and design their own posters advertising the farmers' market held at the school. Most pupils create simple databases competently, for example to compare their height and arm span. They have an appropriate understanding of how to sort and interrogate data. Most pupils use tablet computers to record a simple dialogue and present the work using green screen technology to vary the background. Most pupils are beginning to use spreadsheets for modelling and simulation with increasing confidence. However, this element of their ICT work is at an early stage of development. The role of pupils as digital leaders is developing well. They support other pupils effectively to develop new skills, for example in using quick response codes to store and retrieve a range of work, such as an audio recording of a radio play.

Long-term planning for the teaching of writing in the foundation phase is good. It ensures that pupils receive a suitable range of opportunities to write independently at length in literacy lessons and in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers provide useful criteria to help pupils understand how to write successfully for different purposes, for example when writing a report about the 'Manchester ridge back dragon; the smallest dragon in the British Isles.' Their ability to write at length with increasing independence and for a suitable range of purposes is developing well. They acquire new skills progressively and use devices, such as story maps, successfully to plan their writing. Many pupils use descriptive words effectively to make their work interesting for the reader, for instance when writing a story about a talking fruit, or when writing a letter of apology to the little red hen.

Recommendation 2: Develop planning to ensure continuity and progression in the development of pupils' skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy

Planning to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is developing well. The school's plans identify a range of relevant and interesting opportunities for pupils to develop these skills. In the foundation phase, these

activities include effective 'superglue activities', which provide a varied degree of challenge for pupils of different abilities as they work independently in the continuous and enhanced provision. In key stage 2, the use of 'rich' tasks provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through open-ended activities. An effective example of this is a bridge building project where pupils developed a variety of numeracy skills, such as measuring and calculations with money.

Most pupils have a suitable range of opportunities to apply their literacy skills across the curriculum, to the same standard as in their language lessons. In the foundation phase, teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop and present ideas within interesting contexts. As a result, most pupils speak confidently when expressing their opinions and discuss key information confidently, for example when taking part in a role-play about the story of Robert the Bruce. Staff use effective strategies to improve pupils' use of language and the formation of letters. Through direct teaching and opportunities for independent work, most pupils are developing appropriate sentence starters and time connectives in their writing. Teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas and construct a final piece of writing successfully. As a result, most pupils write confidently and to a good standard.

In key stage 2, teachers provide pupils with relevant tasks to develop their understanding of the main ideas, events and characters in texts. Pupils demonstrate increased confidence when reading using an improved range of reading materials. Staff deploy learning support assistants suitably to support pupils in their reading activities. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards of reading. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils have appropriate opportunities to write for a suitable range of purposes. For example, Year 6 pupils explain clearly many changes to farming techniques over the last 300 years. However, in key stage 2, the quality of pupils' writing remains too variable. A minority of pupils do not always punctuate their work accurately enough or take sufficient care with handwriting and presentation. The school has introduced spelling journals to provide improved opportunities for pupils to record different words and regular spelling patterns. However, these activities have not yet had a strong enough effect on standards of spelling overall.

The school has introduced improved learning opportunities to allow pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, in their topic work pupils in the foundation phase use their knowledge of symmetry to design a shield with symmetrical patterns creatively. In key stage 2, there are a suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils use a range of numeracy skills confidently to calculate the required materials and costs involved with building a bridge. However, teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities in a wide enough range of purposeful contexts. As a result, a minority of pupils do not develop and consolidate their numeracy skills strongly.

Recommendation 3: Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking, problem solving and independent learning skills

There is a strong focus on developing pupils' problem solving and thinking skills across the school. In the foundation phase, planning regularly includes interesting problem solving activities that help pupils to develop their reasoning skills

appropriately. For example, many pupils tackle problems confidently when developing a pattern on a drinking vessel using a variety of shapes in sequence. In key stage 2, staff plan regular opportunities for pupils to use their thinking and problem solving skills in different contexts. They provide useful opportunities for them to engage in challenging 'rich tasks' where they collaborate in small groups to apply a range of skills to solve a problem. In a recent example, pupils used their thinking skills successfully to suggest different ways to develop farming in the future. As a result, many pupils throughout the school approach problems confidently and develop their thinking skills increasingly well. Teachers and support staff challenge the pupils to show perseverance when completing their tasks, and nearly all pupils respond positively.

Throughout the school, staff develop pupils' thinking skills well through skilful questioning. For example, in the foundation phase, younger pupils make sensible suggestions about how to build a nest to keep a dragon's egg warm in order for it to hatch. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their thinking skills to assess the quality of their work. For example, many pupils in key stage 2 write thoughtful reflections about how difficult they found a literacy activity and how they could improve the quality of the content and presentation of their work.

Foundation phase pupils have regular opportunities to develop their independence through engaging tasks in the indoor and outdoor environments. These offer pupils a choice of activities at varying levels of difficulty that successfully meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Most pupils can explain confidently how they approach these tasks, and the choices that they make. Throughout the school, there has been a significant reduction in the use of worksheets during lessons. This means that most pupils are developing their ability to write more creatively and independently. Teachers in key stage 2 are beginning to allow time for pupils to work more independently and in groups. They allow pupils to try out different ideas, even if some are unsuccessful. As a result, pupils' independent learning skills are beginning to develop successfully.

Recommendation 4: Use assessment and tracking systems effectively to monitor the progress of all pupils and to identify clearly the next steps in learning

The school's assessment policy provides a concise summary of its processes for monitoring and tracking the progress of its pupils. Teachers have established an annual programme of assessment activities that enables them to collect appropriate information about pupils' performance throughout the year. The school has produced a useful overview of pupils' progress in relation to standardised tests. Together with an electronic tracking system, these allow the school to monitor pupils' progress and achievements over time effectively. Teachers review this information regularly and use it to provide suitable interventions for individual pupils.

In the foundation phase, teachers provide clear and useful verbal feedback, which supports pupils effectively to know what they are doing well and what they need to improve. With support, many pupils are beginning to decide on useful success criteria for a few of their tasks. This helps them to understand what they need to do to be successful. Older foundation phase pupils use simple picture grids to assess their written literacy and numeracy work confidently and constructively.

In key stage 2, pupils are beginning to develop suitable skills to enable them to assess their own work and that of their peers accurately. For example, most pupils use a range of appropriate success criteria when reviewing work and provide simple but helpful comments for their peers. Teachers provide pupils with regular oral feedback. However, their written comments often do not always provide pupils with appropriate guidance on how to improve what they are doing. Younger pupils do not all have the skills needed to read the comments and, as a result, this feedback is less effective in helping them improve their work. Pupils respond suitably to teachers' comments when they are given time to do so. However, inconsistencies remain in how well pupils undertake this activity.

Teacher assessment is accurate and teachers use this information effectively to help identify appropriate targets for pupil progress. Many pupils understand these targets and this helps them to focus suitably on areas where they need to improve.

Recommendation 5: Establish stable leadership

The acting headteacher joined the school in September 2016 and will remain in post until August 2019. This provides stability and supports the work of staff in endeavouring to achieve consistent and sustained improvement. An experienced headteacher mentors the acting headteacher effectively.

The acting headteacher has a significant workload, with many teaching commitments in key stage 2. Additional funding from the local authority enables the headteacher to undertake leadership responsibilities for one and a half days per week. As a result, he has improved provision and built on the effective progress made against the recommendations. The acting headteacher has established a clear vision for improvement within the school. He shares this well with all stakeholders, creating a positive, shared sense of purpose within the school community. He focuses much of his work on building this vision, improving the school's provision for developing pupils' skills, and on recording performance data to track pupils' progress. He has been successful in encouraging staff and governors to work effectively as a team and he involves them appropriately in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, they focus constructively on implementing new initiatives across the school.

The acting headteacher and other staff have clear roles and responsibilities. Performance management objectives align suitably with the school's post-inspection action plan. The headteacher has arranged worthwhile opportunities for all staff and governors to develop their skills, through attending external training events and receiving regular support from the local authority. Staff and governors have visited other schools to observe good practice, for example in ICT and in developing an effective school council. As a result, they have higher expectations of pupils' standards and are able to reflect more critically upon the quality of the school's provision.

Recommendation 6: Develop the role of the governing body as a critical friend

Governors take a full and active part in the life of the school. They take on link responsibilities for subject areas and for priorities within the post-inspection action plan. They attend a range of sub-committees and visit the school regularly to review its progress in addressing the recommendations from the core inspection.

Members of the governing body undertake a suitable range of training opportunities to help them fulfil their roles effectively. This includes a combination of in-house and external training for data analysis, self-evaluation and performance management. This means that governors are developing a more secure understanding of how pupils' standards of achievement compare with the performance of pupils in similar schools. They speak confidently about their observation of practice from visiting other schools and make helpful suggestions for improvement, for example to strengthen pupils' use of peer and self-assessment.

Nearly all governors take part in monitoring and evaluating provision and standards in the school through the scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and discussions with staff and pupils. For example, two governors recently met with pupils to scrutinise and talk about their literacy work. Following the visit, they produce useful reports on pupils' strengths and areas for future developments to share with the rest of the governing body. This enables governors to become more aware of pupils' standards in specific areas, such as the need to improve their spelling further.

The governing body supports new members well in order for them to take forward their role effectively. For example, new members undertake monitoring activities, such as listening to learners, with more experienced governors. This allows them to develop their understanding of school evaluation usefully. The acting headteacher supports governors successfully to question the school about its work. This enhances their ability to challenge the headteacher and staff more effectively. For example, governors recently challenged the school in relation to the impact that training and visits have on raising pupils' standards.

Recommendation 7: Use the outcomes of self-evaluation to identify priorities and to set clear and measurable targets for improvement

The school's processes for monitoring and evaluating its work draw on a wide range of evidence, including scrutinising books and analysing information about pupils' performance. Staff are beginning to seek the views of pupils and parents effectively to contribute to the process. There is a suitable timetable for the school to collect information to identify strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, leaders are able to monitor and evaluate much of the school's work appropriately. However, these activities do not always identify a few important areas that continue to require improvement, such as the consistent application of teaching strategies in key stage 2.

The headteacher discusses the outcomes of self-evaluation activities with staff and the full governing body. This is beginning to make a difference in the school, such as in improving younger pupils' independent writing skills and ensuring that teachers plan regular opportunities to develop pupils' problem solving and thinking skills. However, strategies to improve pupils' spelling are at an early stage and have not yet had a strong effect on standards. The school uses local authority and the regional consortium reviews effectively to help identify areas that need further development, for example to demonstrate clearly the impact of improved ICT resources on pupil outcomes.

The school has used a good range of evidence to update the self-evaluation report. The report links well to the post-inspection action plan and identifies strengths and

areas for development clearly. The acting headteacher and governors review and update the post-inspection action plan regularly. There are clear timescales for actions and leaders track the progress of these effectively.

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.