



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**

**Goetre Primary School  
Rowan Way  
Gurnos Estate  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 9PB**

**Date of visit: January 2017**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Fiona Arnison	Reporting Inspector
Jane McCarthy	Team Inspector

## Outcome of monitoring

Goetre Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in December 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: Improve standards in the core areas of learning in the Foundation Phase and the core subjects at key stage 2**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils make good use of their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to help them to read and write. They discuss their work enthusiastically, for example by talking about their favourite books and stories. Most listen appropriately when their teachers are explaining tasks. By Year 2, more able pupils write confidently, for example when writing extended stories and newspaper reports, although not all pupils in the Foundation Phase write sufficiently well at length. Often this is because they complete too many worksheets where the pupils only write a few words, particularly in their topic work. This prevents them from achieving higher standards of independent writing.

By the end of key stage 2, many pupils speak confidently to adults and their peers. Many pupils read fluently at an age appropriate level, although a minority use limited expression, for example taking little account of punctuation marks when reading aloud. Many pupils know the features of a range of text types, and are able to write appropriately in a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction genres. Many pupils make appropriate use of a range of punctuation in their writing, and use paragraphs and subheadings to organise their work. A minority of pupils have a very limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to write effective poetry or imaginative description.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils have a basic understanding of number, shape and graphs. They can solve simple word problems. By Year 2, more able pupils can calculate simple fractions of numbers, use and understand negative numbers, and solve simple problems. Across key stage 2, most pupils make good progress in their number work in mathematics. Nevertheless, they achieve lower standards in numeracy in other subjects, for example through science.

The school has recently focused on improving pupils' outcomes in science by ensuring that the subject is taught regularly through key stage 2. Recent work in pupils' books shows that many now develop their knowledge and skills in scientific enquiry at a suitable level. For example, by Year 6, most pupils can make sensible predictions, understand the need for a fair test and draw simple conclusions from their investigations. Although an increasing proportion of pupils have achieved the expected level in science over the past four years at the end of Year 6, nonetheless the proportion remains below all comparators.

Across the school, many pupils develop a suitable handwriting script. In the Foundation Phase, many pupils develop a good pencil grip and form their letters correctly, but a minority do not form digits correctly when recording their number work. By Year 6, a majority can use an appropriate joined style of handwriting, although a few need reminders to do so routinely.

Until very recently, pupils' performance at the end of the Foundation Phase and at the end of key stage 2 over time has generally placed the school in the bottom 25% when compared with similar schools. However, in 2016, pupils' improved performance at the expected level placed the school in the lower 50% for the Foundation Phase indicator and the core subject indicator at key stage 2, and the higher 50% for literacy in the Foundation Phase. Pupils who attend the specialist learning resource classes make good progress from their starting points, and in 2016 a few Year 6 pupils who attend these classes also achieved the core subject indicator.

Leaders rightly recognise the need to build further on pupils' accelerated progress so that those who are capable achieve the higher-than-expected levels for their age.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve standards in Welsh as a second language**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation.

Pupils' standards in Welsh have improved. Many pupils in the lower Foundation Phase ask and answer a few simple questions with confidence and understanding. In Year 2, the more able pupils respond well to a range of questions about familiar situations. For example, they can describe the weather and say where they live, extending their sentences to include the names of family members and pets. They read familiar books in Welsh with appropriate pronunciation and good understanding. They write simple sentences independently, although their spelling of Welsh words is not always accurate.

In key stage 2, most pupils show enthusiasm for learning Welsh. Many can use familiar language patterns when talking. For example, they can describe what they like doing in school and at home and say why they enjoy these activities. They read and understand familiar stories, but do not always pronounce words correctly. Pupils engage in a variety of interesting tasks in Welsh, for example collecting data for tally charts and writing descriptions of their town. However, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write without support. For example, in too many lessons, pupils copy into their books from the worksheets and vocabulary banks that their teachers provide. As a result, most pupils' independent writing skills are limited to very familiar sentences and phrases. In addition, many struggle to spell words correctly without support.

Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in Welsh have improved and, in 2016, around half of pupils attained the expected level for their age.

### **Recommendation 3: Improve attendance**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation.

The school has a range of effective strategies and procedures to improve attendance that have a positive impact on pupils' overall attendance rates. Attendance has improved steadily from around 91% at the time of the original inspection to 94.0% at the end of the last academic year. When compared with levels of attendance in similar schools, the school has moved from bottom 25% to higher 50%. Attendance for the current school year continues to improve and stands at 94.6%. Punctuality has also improved, although a few pupils are still regularly late to school.

The school's family engagement officer is highly effective as an 'attendance champion'. She analyses data robustly and tracks the attendance of all pupils to identify those with high rates of absenteeism or patterns of non-attendance. She is actively supported by the school's leaders. As a result, she is able to employ a broad range of strategies to support and challenge families efficiently, for example through visiting homes to discuss attendance issues. The school is consistent in issuing fixed penalty notices, following warnings and discussions with parents, when pupils do not attend school regularly or are persistently late.

The school tracks the impact of improved attendance and punctuality on outcomes for learners, and identifies clearly to parents the detrimental effect of poor attendance or punctuality on pupils' progress. Members of the 'attendance council' understand how absence can adversely affect their school work, and have begun to work with the 'attendance champion' to improve their peers' outcomes and attitudes.

**Recommendation 4: Review the school timetable in order to ensure an appropriate balance in teaching time for all areas of the curriculum**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

The school has an appropriate timetable that ensures that all pupils have access to a suitable curriculum. In particular, time is devoted to improving pupils' core skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, the time devoted to the foundation subjects is limited because of the school's recent heavy focus on improving literacy and numeracy. Leaders recognise the need to develop opportunities to enrich pupils' learning experiences, for example through sport and the creative arts.

Teachers' planning provides an increasing number of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills appropriately, supported by comprehensive skills ladders for the different subject areas. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects to the same standard as in English, particularly at key stage 2.

A majority of teachers plan opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in some other subject areas, such as science or geography. However, pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply their shape, space and measuring skills, for example in worthwhile design technology activities.

Most classrooms are productive and orderly, and teaching time is used well. In many classrooms through the school, teachers have built on good Foundation Phase practice, by providing pupils with enhanced opportunities to use their literacy and

numeracy skills in specific contexts. Teachers make good use of the indoor learning environment, for example to provide suitable areas for pupils to enjoy reading in comfortable, engaging surroundings. The school is beginning to develop outdoor provision for Foundation Phase pupils, but currently there are too few meaningful opportunities to learn outdoors.

**Recommendation 5: Refine assessment procedures in order to ensure that they are effective and manageable**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation.

Leaders have devised helpful, manageable methods for teachers to assess, track and record pupils' progress. All teachers now complete a clear, visual record of which pupils are on track to achieve the expected levels, and they take appropriate action to accelerate the progress of pupils who are falling behind. This distributed responsibility has ensured that an increasing proportion of pupils reach the levels expected for their age by the end of their time at the school.

Teachers are beginning to make suitable use of detailed analyses of the electronic tracking data, for example to plan activities at the expected level which take good account of pupils' starting points and prior knowledge and understanding. However, too few teachers use their knowledge of what pupils can already achieve to provide learning that challenges more able pupils to achieve their best.

Nearly all teachers give pupils valuable feedback about their work, and what they need to do next. A majority of pupils take good account of their teachers' comments and as a result, their work improves. Recently, teachers have worked to ensure that their comments are worded carefully, so that all pupils across the school are able to act on their teachers' feedback. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

There are suitable moderation activities to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science at the expected level are accurate. Regular pupil progress meetings ensure that the assessment data matches the work in pupils' books, and that teachers plan suitable interventions to bring about the required improvements for any pupils falling behind the age-appropriated level. Leaders have rightly recognised that teachers need further support in order to assess accurately pupils' independent achievements at the higher-than-expected levels.

**Recommendation 6: Develop the role of the governors in challenging the school**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

There have been considerable changes to the governing body since the core inspection in 2013. Governors with a range of useful skills have joined the governing body during this period. The school has engaged an external consultant to help governors better understand their roles and responsibilities. Governors have attended an appropriate range of training courses, including about how to evaluate

the school's attainment data. Attendance at full governing body meetings has improved. A new chair of governors has been in place since April 2016. He has helped the governing body to evaluate their effectiveness and to identify how they need to improve. He provides a good role model for other governors in how to provide appropriate challenge to the school's senior leadership team.

Members of the governing body now visit the school regularly and take part in a variety of activities that help them to understand the progress that the school is making towards its post inspection action plan. These include learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' books. The school's finance sub-committee meets regularly and in recent years has monitored the school's expenditure more effectively. As a result, the school has reduced a budget deficit that it had carried for two years, ending the last financial year with a small surplus.

Governors have a better understanding of the work of the school and the progress that pupils make. This improved knowledge of the school and pupil's outcomes is helping governors to ask relevant questions of senior leaders and to hold them to account for the standards pupils achieve. However, the increased focus and challenge from governors has not yet had a full impact on pupils' standards. For example, although standards at the expected level have improved, more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

**Recommendation 7: Ensure that the priorities in the improvement plan focus appropriately on raising standards across all areas of the curriculum**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation.

The school has used its post inspection action plan to ensure that all leaders and teachers focus appropriately on the recommendations from the core inspection in order to raise standards for pupils. As a result, the school has been successful in improving end of key stage outcomes for pupils at the expected levels.

Senior leaders have evaluated progress against the action plan regularly. They use a worthwhile range of first hand evidence to help them know how well pupils are achieving. For example, they carry out regular data analysis, work scrutiny and classroom observations. From this work, leaders and governors have identified accurately aspects of the school's work that still require improvement. These include developing the school's outdoor areas as a learning resource and improving the quality and consistency of teaching.

School leaders carry out regular observations of teaching and use these to provide useful feedback to staff on how they can improve their practice. However, these observations focus heavily on teaching and not enough on the progress that pupils make in their learning and the outcomes they achieve. As a result, leaders miss opportunities to identify common errors that pupils make. Generally, the school's overall judgements on the quality of teaching are too generous.

The headteacher recognises that some recommendations from the core inspection are not yet fully addressed, for example, improving pupils' standards in Welsh. The school has included these suitably in their draft future improvement plan.

## **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.