



Arolygiaeth El Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: Special Measures**

**Cwmbach CIW Primary School
Tirfounder Road
Cwmbach
Aberdare
RCT
CF44 0AT**

Date of visit: June 2019

by

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

Outcome of visit

Cwmbach Church in Wales Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

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

R1. Raise standards of reading, writing and numeracy

Standards in reading have improved significantly for many pupils since the time of the core inspection. In particular, pupils in key stage 2 have made strong progress from a low starting point. In the foundation phase, most pupils develop a secure understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and many apply this well when reading and spelling unfamiliar words. They have a good understanding of the features of books, such as the role of the blurb in giving a first impression of a book's content. Pupils across the school have access to a wide range of class reading books and benefit from regular guided reading in groups. They are enthusiastic about the books they read. Recently, the school has introduced a system of 'reading buddies' where older pupils support younger pupils in the foundation phase to improve their reading skills. This has improved many pupils confidence in reading aloud. By Year 6, many read with suitable fluency and accuracy. Their comprehension skills are generally sound and a minority are beginning to infer implicit meaning in text. However, in general, in upper key stage 2, the higher order reading skills of pupils who are more able remain underdeveloped. Across the school, a few pupils still do not meet age-appropriate expectations.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in the development of their writing skills from low starting points. They understand a good range of forms of writing and apply this well in their own work. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use persuasive language and techniques, such as alliteration and rhetorical questions successfully, to write a brochure to encourage tourists to visit Brazil. In key stage 2, the quality of many pupils' writing, including their ability to write at length in literacy lessons and across the curriculum, has improved. In general, many pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 use basic punctuation accurately and spell common words correctly. They use the internet to research information for their topic work, make notes and use these to plan their writing appropriately. For example, they create engaging reports on killer whales and dolphins. A majority of pupils are beginning to develop a wider vocabulary to add interest to their writing. However, many pupils in upper key stage 2 continue to write at too low a level and do not redraft and improve their work frequently enough.

In mathematics, many pupils make the expected progress in the development of their skills over time and they achieve at a level that is suitable for their age and ability. For instance, pupils in Year 2 use formal written methods well to add and subtract numbers to 100, and older pupils develop an understanding of more advanced topics, such as algebra. However, few pupils in key stage 2 have the necessary skills to solve problems independently or to choose the most appropriate written or mental strategy.

In the foundation phase, most pupils apply their numeracy skills well in their work across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 measure and record temperature in areas around the school. They use their understanding of subtraction and their graphing skills to calculate and demonstrate the differences in temperature, successfully. However, in key stage 2, in too many cases, pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum remains underdeveloped.

R2. Ensure that teaching meets the needs and abilities of all pupils

Teachers use an increasing variety of strategies and organisation to meet the needs and abilities of most pupils. This includes ability grouping pupils for phonic lessons, presenting tasks at different levels, providing different amounts of support and knowing how best to challenge individuals. In Years 1 and 2, staff have developed pupils' ability to use success criteria independently to guide them in their work. As a result, pupils of all abilities have a strong understanding of how to be successful in their activities. Staff use individual education plans for pupils with additional learning needs effectively to link work appropriately to pupils' targets. As a result, teaching now provides better opportunities for pupils to achieve in line with their abilities.

All teachers and teaching assistants have positive working relationships with pupils. They understand and support their academic and emotional needs well. The improved use of enhanced and continuous provision in the foundation phase provides good opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills appropriate to their individual needs and abilities. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 enjoy using a water pistol in the outdoor area to soak the words that match the letter sounds they have chosen at random from the water tray.

Teachers are beginning to use real-life contexts well to engage pupils' interest. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop their numeracy skills effectively when calculating the overall cost of the ingredients they purchase to make slime as part of a practical science lesson. However, overall, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop a full range of numeracy skills across the curriculum at a suitably challenging level.

R3. Establish accurate and rigorous procedures for recording and tracking pupil progress

Senior leaders have developed a wide range of useful systems for recording and tracking the progress of pupils. These allow them to work with staff to maintain a coherent overview of the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and other subjects. The use of an electronic system to gather assessments of pupils' progress in reading and writing is particularly beneficial in allowing staff to monitor closely the development of pupils' literacy skills.

Staff use a good range of information to inform their tracking systems. This includes a wide variety of test data, such as the recently introduced online personalised assessments for numeracy, and regular paper-based reading tests. Senior leaders select assessments that are appropriate to the needs of the school and its pupils. They have the confidence to cease the use of assessments that do not suit their purposes and introduce new ones as appropriate.

Senior leaders recognise the need to ensure the accuracy of teacher assessments through the gathering of first-hand evidence, such as looking at samples of pupils' work. This is beginning to ensure that the information stored on the school's electronic tracking systems is an accurate reflection of what pupils achieve. They continue to work well with other local schools to compare pupils' work and to reach agreement on the levels they have achieved. However, teacher assessment is still not always secure, particularly at the higher levels in key stage 2.

Half-termly pupil progress meetings focus appropriately on a mix of pupils' work and test data. These provide a useful forum for senior leaders to work with staff to review the progress of individual pupils and to consider the effectiveness of intervention and support programmes. The school uses this information well to support the progress of specific groups of learners. For example, they identify and consider the progress of vulnerable pupils and modify provision to support their particular needs appropriately.

R4. Improve leadership at all levels

The headteacher, who took up his post in September 2018, has established a clear vision for the school's future, which staff and governors share. He has taken the school forward well over a short period and made many purposeful decisions that have benefitted pupils and staff. He has established a clear staffing structure with most staff now on permanent contracts. He has developed the internal and external environment of the school well and made classrooms more effective spaces for teaching and learning. He has secured additional funding to boost the cultural development of pupils, for example through theatre visits and a residential

experience for Year 6 pupils. In collaboration with governors, he has moved the school's finances from a deficit to a projected surplus over the year.

Most staff now have appropriate leadership roles and receive suitable training to develop their leadership and professional skills. Middle managers undertake their co-ordination roles appropriately and provide suitable leadership in their allocated subject areas. Staff plan well together, particularly within phases, and they form a close-knit team.

The chair of governors provides strong leadership for the governing body and has developed their ability to challenge aspects of the school's work successfully. Governors undertake their work conscientiously. They review and approve school policies appropriately and provide suitable oversight of the school's finances. Link governors for literacy and numeracy have undertaken learning walks with a focus on particular aspects of provision and have fed their findings back to senior leaders and the governing body. A sub-committee of the governing body keeps a close eye on the implementation of the post-inspection action plan and the full governing body reviews progress regularly.

The systems and structures within the school help to drive forward positive change and there are strong signs of progress in terms of the quality of provision and gains made by many pupils in their literacy and numeracy skills.

R5. Involve all staff and governors in monitoring progress against agreed improvement priorities

The school has clear arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of its provision and judging progress in relation to agreed priorities. There is a well-understood timetable of monitoring events and activities throughout the year. Leaders have monitored carefully the implementation of the post-inspection action plan and provided governors with regular reports on its progress. Staff analyse data on pupils' progress thoroughly, identify any issues and act appropriately as a result, for example by modifying intervention support for individual pupils. Leaders work well with external partners, such as challenge advisers, to judge the quality of pupils' work and to identify any issues that need improvement.

Staff with leadership responsibilities for literacy and numeracy undertake suitable monitoring activities. For example, the literacy co-ordinator has listened to selected pupils read and scrutinised the written work of pupils in all classes. Co-ordinators compile useful reports on their findings and feed them back to staff. In undertaking monitoring activities, there has been a strong emphasis on checking for compliance with agreed policies, coverage of the curriculum and consideration of various aspects of teaching. This has helped to secure more consistent provision across the school. Leaders have improved these activities further by focusing more clearly on standards

and the quality of pupils' learning. For example, staff have worked collaboratively to create their own criteria for successful teaching that identifies well what good learning looks like. They use this well to help them make judgements about the effectiveness of their classroom practice.

Governors have undertaken a suitable range of first-hand monitoring activities, such as learning walks focusing on phonics lessons, literacy displays and the provision of reading buddies. There is an agreed policy for the monitoring role of governors with clear parameters for undertaking this role. There are appropriate arrangements to link governors to specific subjects and areas of learning. Governors provide a suitable degree of challenge, for example by querying the reasons behind sudden improvements in pupils' reading ages.

R6. Improve the management of staff resources

The school has made considerable improvements in its management of staffing and other resources. Nearly all teaching and support staff have permanent contracts and this has brought much-needed stability to the workforce. All staff have clear job descriptions and a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to teaching, learning, raising standards and improving pupils' wellbeing. The quality and consistency of teaching throughout the school has improved, and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are increasing. These changes have had a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement. For example, most pupils' phonic knowledge has improved as a result of a consistent approach to the teaching of reading.

School leaders have high, but realistic expectations of teaching and support staff. They deploy staff appropriately, taking good account of their skills, expertise and interests to provide valuable learning experiences for pupils. Performance management processes meet requirements. Targets relate closely to school priorities, but also encourage staff to undertake meaningful professional learning to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, peer review observations support teachers to identify, evaluate and share effective practice across the school. Effective collaboration with other schools in the regional consortium and diocese has helped the school to enhance its provision in key areas, including literacy and the foundation phase.