



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: Estyn Review**

**Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary School
Cefn Lane
Glyncoch
Pontypridd
CF37 3BP**

Date of visit: January 2020

by

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

Outcome of visit

The Fern Federation of Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary School and Cefn Primary School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspections.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is increasing the level of follow-up activity.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school following receipt of the action plan, to ensure that it is suitable and likely to bring about the required improvement. Inspectors will visit the school in a further 12 months' time, to monitor progress in addressing the recommendations.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Establish stable and effective leadership and teaching teams

Since the core inspection, there have been several notable changes in leadership across the Fern Federation. Currently the executive headteacher of the federation is absent. The head of school at Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has taken this role temporarily and is now sharing her time between the two schools in the federation. Although the governing body has plans to appoint an acting head of school at Craig-Y-Hesg Primary, it is unclear at this stage of the impact this may have on the school's progress. Plans for the ongoing leadership of the federation and, therefore, both schools are unclear and remain unstable. As a result, progress in addressing many aspects of this and a few other recommendations since the core inspection have lacked urgency and rigour.

Over time, Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has benefitted from more stable leadership than Cefn Primary. As a result, improvements have been implemented with more pace and actions have had a positive effect on many of the school's improvement priorities. For example, purposeful staff training and an improved curriculum have led to a clear improvement in the writing skills of many pupils and in the consistent provision for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum. However, leaders have not identified and addressed a few issues, such as the need to ensure that foundation phase practice is secure in all classes in the phase.

Since the core inspection, the teaching team at Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has remained stable. At Cefn Primary, the teaching team has changed significantly and the school's future staffing structure is unknown. A minority of teachers have temporary contracts. This affects the stability of teaching teams across the federation and the pace of progress towards improvement priorities. In Craig-Y-Hesg Primary, all teachers have received beneficial training, such as how to implement effective formative assessment, and this has led to many pupils having better opportunities to understand how they can improve their work. As a result, teaching supports a majority of pupils well. However, there are important areas for improvement in teaching, such as the need to ensure less able pupils make better progress.

Members of the governing body receive a range of useful information from school leaders, including reports on staffing, pupils' attendance and the school's budget. They use this information carefully to support leaders in running the school. They challenge leaders appropriately about issues, such as spending. However, a majority of governors have too little first-hand information about the quality of provision and pupils' standards. They do not challenge leaders enough about the slow progress a minority of pupils make over time. Their role in holding leaders to account for these important areas of school life across the federation is limited.

Overall, the continuing instability of the federation's leadership team hinders the progress made in this recommendation in both schools. Leaders have not thought or planned strategically well enough across the federation. Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has benefitted from more stable and stronger leadership and has therefore made stronger progress in addressing its recommendations. The vision of both schools working effectively as one federation has only recently started to materialise. Very recently, the two schools have begun to operate as a more effective federation, with leaders facilitating beneficial cross school working. However, these arrangements have not had time to embed and lead to any notable improvements.

R2. Improve monitoring and school improvement processes to ensure they focus on raising standards for pupils

In the short-term, leaders undertake a suitable range of monitoring activities to enable them to identify strengths and shortcomings in the school's provision and teaching. For example, they undertake learning walks, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work competently. In many cases, senior leaders identify where teachers are working effectively and where they could make beneficial improvements in their practice. Leaders with responsibility for areas of learning scrutinise pupils' work carefully across both schools and this helps them to monitor progress towards the school and federation's improvement priorities. However, school leaders have not ensured that there is a clear strategic plan for this work that evaluates progress towards targets systematically over a suitable period of time. The head of school undertakes her own, additional monitoring of standards, such as scrutinising pupils' work. She shares the outcomes of this with teachers and this contributes positively

to the areas where improvements have been most notable. For example, the scrutiny of pupils' literacy work has helped to support the improvement in pupils' writing skills. This practice is not applied consistently across the federation and teachers are not always aware of how they can improve their practice. In a minority of cases, monitoring is not evaluative enough and does not focus sharply enough on the standards that pupils achieve. This limits the effectiveness of the scrutiny and the impact that these processes have on pupils' standards.

The federation has a suitable post inspection action plan that considers recommendations from the core inspection appropriately across both schools. This plan identifies a suitable broad range of relevant actions to address identified shortcomings. However, not all teachers and leaders understand fully all elements of the improvement strategies and this hinders their effectiveness. Occasionally, the federation's strategies do not focus well enough on improving pupils' standards. The head of school in Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has developed her own, more focused improvement plans to supplement the post inspection action plan. This has helped to improve the pace of progress in Craig -Yr-Hesg Primary, but not across the federation.

R3. Improve the quality of teaching and ensure any grouping arrangements across classes enable pupils of all abilities to make effective progress

Teaching groups in the federation were rearranged into mixed ability classes in September 2019. As a result, most teachers now feel more able to plan for and deliver lessons that meet the needs of all their pupils. Planning has improved appropriately and generally outlines a range of suitably challenging tasks. These changes are having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and the quality of teaching across the school. However, the delay in addressing this recommendation across the federation has resulted in a minority of pupils, especially the less able, making slower than expected progress.

Teachers generally have high expectations of all pupils and challenge them to extend their learning successfully. For example, they set challenges at different levels of difficulty and encourage more able pupils to attempt the most difficult tasks. Leaders ensure that teachers' evaluations of pupil progress focus well on all groups of pupils. This has had a positive effect on pupils' standards and progress. Most pupils respond to class challenges well. Across the school, pupils talk knowledgeably about their work and see themselves as confident and capable learners.

In the foundation phase, most pupils concentrate and persevere well when working in different learning areas and respond purposefully to different levels of challenge that they are set. In reception, teachers plan a good range of continuous and enhanced learning activities that support all pupils well. For example, they buy fruit for the giant in the shop and build a beanstalk from numbered blocks to practise counting skills. Older foundation phase pupils work collaboratively in pairs and small groups when

playing a maths game. However, although there are a wide range of activities for pupils to access, opportunities for pupils to be more independent and choose their own activities are limited.

Across key stage 2, nearly all teachers have improved the quality of their classroom practice. For example, lessons are engaging, proceed at a brisk pace and are planned to enable all pupils to access challenges that are well matched to their ability. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard and try their best, and there are productive professional relationships. As a result, most pupils collaborate and behave well. Teachers plan together and share their ideas effectively. They invite pupils' to decide what they would like to learn, this successfully improves their levels of motivation and the learning experiences. As a result, most pupils are better engaged in their learning and enjoy new opportunities to participate in exciting activities. For example, in Year 6, more able pupils write thoughtfully and maturely when discussing the effects of deforestation.

R4. Raise standards in writing

Following the core inspection, leaders undertook an audit to identify clear areas for improvement. The subject leader for English worked closely with regional advisers and arranged purposeful training for all staff. This enabled staff to follow a range of effective classroom strategies to improve pupils' writing skills. For example, leaders they have mapped out a comprehensive range of writing genres and supported teachers to build these into their classroom topics. This is helping to ensure that pupils develop a wider understanding of different styles of writing. Leaders and a few teachers have visited other schools and used their findings to develop a systematic structure for teaching phonics skills. Similarly, a whole-school spelling strategy ensures an improved focus on this important area of learning. Overall, many teachers apply these strategies consistently across the school and as a result many pupils are improving their writing skills.

Pupils write for a wide range of purposes and many write at a level suitable for their stage of development and age. For example, by the end of reception, many pupils identify the sounds at the beginning and end of words and start to make good attempts at writing simple sentences. Pupils in Year 2 write thoughtfully and creatively, for example when producing acrostic poems about harvest time. Many pupils use capital letters and full stops consistently and more able pupils make good attempts at spelling more difficult words.

As the pupils progress through key stage 2, most pupils produce work across a wide variety of writing genres and for different purposes. In Year 4, more able pupils extend their writing and entice the reader through a good use of descriptive vocabulary. Many lower key stage 2 pupils sequence writing sensibly. They understand how to write persuasive texts, for example by sending letters to the council arguing against the extension of the local quarry. By the end of Year 6, most

use a range of strategies to plan their writing, such as using lists and making notes. Many edit and redraft confidently to improve their writing, many spell well and use punctuation effectively. Across key stage 2, most pupils enjoy writing and when possible, many visit the writing corner to engage in independent pieces of work.

R5. Ensure all teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across the curriculum

Since the core inspection, subject leaders across the federation have worked closely with teachers and regional consortia advisors to ensure that all pupils enjoy a greater range of opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. Professional dialogue meetings between senior leaders and teachers have enabled all staff to gain greater clarity about expectations for cross curricular working. Most staff have benefitted from opportunities to visit other schools to view good practice and to gain a greater understanding of how to ensure they provide a wide range of relevant experiences

Across the school, provision for numeracy has improved. Planning is more systematic and progressive. As a result, many pupils use and apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, in reception, pupils sort shapes by their colour and the number of sides. In Year 6, when studying rainforests, pupils use their number skills successfully to calculate areas of land to establish new homes for protected animals. While there are many improvements and more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across other areas of learning, on a few occasions the level of work offered completed does not always match the pupils' ability well enough.

Most teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through other areas of study. The subject leader for English has developed a comprehensive genre map which ensures a good range of experiences coverage across all age groups. Most staff follow this and, as a result, nearly all pupils write for a good range of purposes. For example, in upper key stage 2, many pupils produce factual newspaper reports about the battle of Hastings and write historical accounts about life in Wales during the same period of time. Overall, provision for literacy across the curriculum has improved well. However, a few writing activities undertaken do not encourage pupils to write at length, as a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to practise and further improve their writing skills.

Progress in developing opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills is good. Leaders have reviewed provision and developed schemes of work ensuring that all teachers are supported when planning for coverage and progression. Across the school, most pupils are making good progress applying their ICT skills across different subjects and most use ICT naturally as a resource to support their learning. For example, many reception pupils access Hwb and use computer tablets

independently to take pictures. Year 2 pupils save and retrieve their work and produce bar charts about their favourite animals. By the time pupils reach Year 6, most use ICT effectively, for instance, when creating lively presentations for younger pupils about the Nativity and creating databases about endangered animals.

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