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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Report of Estyn monitoring

**Heolddu Comprehensive School
Mountain Road
Bargoed
Caerphilly
CF81 8XL**

Date of visit: November 2012

by

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



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The monitoring team

Steffan James	Reporting Inspector
Denise Whiting-Wade	Team Inspector
Andrea Davies	Local authority representative

Outcome of monitoring visit

Heolddu Comprehensive School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in September 2011. In addition there has been significantly poor performance in key stage 4 this year.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school in about three months' time to inspect progress against the recommendations in the core inspection report in September 2011.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards in literacy and in key stage 3

This recommendation has been partly addressed. The school's provision to improve pupils' literacy in key stage 3 has improved significantly since the core inspection in September 2011. Changes have been well led by the school's literacy co-ordinator, who was appointed in January 2012. She has been well supported by a staff literacy group, although this stopped meeting formally in February of this year.

Initially there was good analysis of the extent of the literacy deficit. The literacy coordinator established an effective database, and arranged regular reading assessments. The school introduced support for pupils at a much broader range of literacy levels than before, and provided a much greater variety of interventions. A series of training events raised staff awareness and encouraged departments to address literacy more effectively than before. The school now expects department schemes of work to include plans to improve literacy, and helpful guidance on marking encourages teachers to support improvements in pupils' writing more effectively.

Data from reading assessments indicates a good improvement in reading ages, with some pupils making significant gains. Lesson observations within a few departments and by the literacy co-ordinator have indicated improvements in classroom practice. The number of pupils with low levels of literacy remains a significant issue for the school.

In 2012, the outcomes of teacher assessments in key stage 3 improved in all subjects, though the amount of improvement varied. English improved significantly at level 5, albeit from a low base. Science repeated its good improvement of last year. Mathematics performance continued its gradual improvement from last year, but still places the school in the fourth quarter of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, though only slightly below the average for the family of schools. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the core subject indicator in key stage 3 increased by 21 percentage points. In relation to the core subject indicator, the school is now in the third quarter when compared to similar schools, and is above the family average.

However, the improvements in assessment outcomes in key stage 3 have been accompanied by a very serious deterioration in performance in key stage 4. Performance in the level 1 threshold and capped points score fell slightly, while level 2 threshold performance fell by six percentage points, the school remains in the third quarter when compared to similar schools. Far more seriously, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics fell very sharply to 24%, the result of a large drop in both English and mathematics performance. This is well below the school's targets and expectations, and is among the lowest scores in Wales. In many subjects at GCSE there are relatively few passes at the higher grades A* and A, and a large amount of C grades. A-level results were weaker than last year.

Although there is still room for further improvement, the school has partly met the first recommendation by improving provision for literacy and raising assessment outcomes in key stage 3. Standards in key stage 4 including standards in English remain a serious cause for concern.

Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of teaching to increase the level of challenge for all pupils

This recommendation has not been addressed.

During the academic year 2011-2012, the senior leadership team undertook very few lesson observations across the school. During the same period only a few heads of department carried out lesson observations and peer assessments. Evidence of the outcomes of these observations is limited, and there has been very little useful analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Consequently there is very little evidence to demonstrate any improvement in the quality of teaching across departments. This term heads of department and senior leaders have begun to implement a programme of lesson observations as part of the performance management process.

The senior leadership team have carried out regular book scrutinies. Analysis of the outcomes of these scrutinies is limited.

Many of the school's actions prescribed in the post-inspection action plan to meet this recommendation have not been met. The school's own progress report on this recommendation is also minimal in content and scope.

Recommendation 3: Increase accountability for improving standards and quality, especially through the establishment of rigorous line management arrangements

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The school has started to make progress towards increasing accountability for improving standards and quality. Data analysis by middle managers has become more robust and systematic. Middle managers meet senior leaders to evaluate trends in performance and to discuss and agree realistic targets for improvement.

The monitoring of performance by senior and middle leaders is not robust enough. For example, intervention strategies are not always introduced early enough to address weak teaching or serious under-performance by pupils. There was

inadequate identification and intervention to address low pupil performance in 2012, especially in both English and mathematics. As a result, less than a quarter of the school's Year 11 pupils attained the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics.

Since the inspection, the school has not made enough progress towards increasing accountability. Formal meetings between line managers and middle managers were too limited in frequency, scope and rigour last year. Full heads of department meetings were not held regularly and only a very few lesson observations took place to identify good practice and areas for improvement. As a result, middle and senior leaders have not been able to focus, at an individual or whole-school level, on important issues concerning pupils' performance and the quality of teaching.

The governing body is developing a fuller understanding of the school's performance. However, it does not yet challenge the school to improve robustly enough.

Recommendation 4: Improve the focus and sharpness of self-evaluation processes and improvement planning

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

After the core inspection the school produced a manageable, and in many areas appropriate, action plan. This set out useful actions to address the recommendations, and it has led to significant improvements in two of these. However the plan did not specify enough lesson observations to address recommendation 2 on improving the quality of teaching. In the event, very few lesson observations have actually taken place. There have been regular reviews of pupils' books, but in the absence of lesson observations these have been the main method of judging pupils' standards and the quality of teaching. Some of the actions prescribed in the plan have not been carried out adequately.

The school's evaluation of progress with the post-inspection action plan is inadequate. The most recent document provides a very thorough review of one recommendation, but coverage of the other four is much too brief, and lacks both detail and focus.

The school has produced a sensible and manageable timetable for self-evaluation at different levels. Appropriately, the prescribed strands of self-evaluation include results analysis, analysis of pupils' progress, work and lesson sampling, pupil surveys and performance management. These form the basis of department and whole-school self-evaluation reports, which in turn lead to development plans.

The format of department self-evaluations, based on Estyn's framework, is broadly appropriate, although the reports themselves vary too much in quality. About half are suitably objective, detailed and self-critical. They identify shortcomings and in doing so highlight important areas that need improvement. A few reports are too self-congratulatory, and fail to identify any areas for improvement at all.

The current whole-school self-evaluation report contains a thorough section on performance data. Some aspects of the framework are covered well, but often there is too little identification of weaknesses or areas for improvement, and the report is

too positive given the current position of the school. Judgments on classroom standards and teaching are not based solidly on lesson observations, and the analysis of book reviews is superficial. With a few exceptions, the same shortcoming applies to the department reports.

Department development plans are generally appropriate, though a few use the Estyn framework too slavishly. Many contain good targets and strategies to reach them, though again they do not plan well enough to improve teaching and learning. Generally they link with the self-evaluation reports.

The whole-school development plan contains a sensible summary of priorities. Some of the actions to address these are good, but the mixture of sections addressing priorities and inspection recommendations is confusing, and the whole plan is not yet focused enough. Actions to improve standards and teaching are not suitably rigorous.

The overall structure and timetable for self-evaluation and development planning are appropriate but, overall, evaluations and plans are not yet rigorous enough.

Recommendation 5: Meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship and address the specific issues of health and safety that inspectors brought to the school's attention

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has made appropriate progress in meeting statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship. Since the inspection, it has successfully introduced a structured framework for the delivery of a 'thought for the day'. This follows a weekly theme across the whole school and provides opportunity for daily reflection. Tutors prepare suitable age-related material for different year groups, which is used in tutorial time and assemblies. It is a requirement for each 'thought for the day' to include some form of prayer. Often this is Christian based, or adapted to provide a humanist perspective.

The school has taken appropriate actions to address the specific health and safety issues brought to the school's attention during the inspection.

The school has fully addressed recommendation 5. However, it has only partly addressed recommendations 1, 3 and 4 and failed to address recommendation 2. In addition, overall performance in key stage 4 this year has deteriorated very badly. There is uncertainty about the future management of the school.