



Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all

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**

**Griffithstown Primary
Florence Place
Griffithstown
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 5DN**

Date of visit: June 2015

by

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

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The monitoring team

Michelle Gosney	Reporting Inspector
Barry Norris	Team Inspector

Outcome of monitoring

Griffithstown Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2014.

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 the standards achieved by pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils who are more able

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The performance of more able pupils has improved since the time of the last inspection. In 2014, Foundation Phase pupils' performance in literacy at the higher-than-expected outcome improved notably. However, the school remained in the higher 50% of similar schools. Pupil performance at the higher outcome in mathematical development also improved strongly moving the school from the bottom 25% of similar schools to the higher 50%. At key stage 2, performance at the higher-than-expected level improved in all core subjects. Pupils' performance places the school in the higher 50% of similar schools in English. However, the school remains in the lower 50% for mathematics and in the bottom 25% for science.

Pupils' work reflects this rise in standards. More able pupils produce well organised extended pieces of writing using a wide range of punctuation and imaginative vocabulary accurately and effectively. These pupils also have strong numeracy skills. They solve number problems well, measure angles, and calculate the area of shapes accurately.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals in each year group is small. This leads to large fluctuations in outcomes from year to year, as the performance of a single pupil has a large impact on results. In 2014, in the Foundation Phase the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals improved at the expected outcome in both literacy and mathematics. However, performance at the higher-than-expected outcome in literacy decreased. At key stage 2, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals improved in the three core subjects at the expected level. Performance of these pupils also improved at the higher-than-expected level in mathematics and science. Overall, there is now little difference between the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils.

Since September 2014, the school has made greater use of data to set targets for all pupils and teachers are now involved fully in target setting. The leadership team analyses expected outcomes for individual pupils and groups of pupils systematically. The deputy headteacher monitors closely the progress of more able pupils and those eligible for free school meals. Teachers meet regularly with the deputy headteacher to monitor pupil performance and plan appropriate interventions to support those who are not making the expected progress. Teachers now know the progress expected for all groups of pupils and leaders hold staff accountable for the outcomes of their pupils. Teachers are beginning to provide appropriately challenging tasks to stretch pupils and this is contributing to the improvement in standards.

Recommendation 2: Develop pupils' extended writing skills

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

There are now frequent opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing activities across the curriculum. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils complete an extended writing activity once per fortnight in their extended writing books as well as providing additional writing opportunities in other subjects. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils develop their writing skills across an appropriate range of genres in a school year.

Since the core inspection, the school has appointed a member of staff with the responsibility for developing English across the school. A new literacy policy sets out clear expectations for teachers. The school has introduced an effective, common approach to planning lessons with a focus on literacy and all staff have received purposeful training to develop a range of appropriate strategies to use when teaching writing.

As a result of these initiatives, the quality of pupils' extended writing is improving. By the end of the Foundation Phase, nearly all pupils write well independently in a suitable variety of genres. For example, Year 2 pupils use imaginative vocabulary in their adventure stories. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils write well for a good range of purposes. Most pupils produce extended pieces of written work with generally accurate spelling and punctuation. However, in a very few examples the quality of pupils extended writing in subjects other than English is not as accurate.

Recommendation 3: Improve pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum in the Foundation Phase

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

There is now a suitable and increasing range of opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical and numeracy skills across the curriculum in the Foundation Phase. Standards in mathematical development improved significantly last year and the school moved from the bottom 25% to the higher 50%, when compared to similar schools in both the expected and higher-than-expected outcomes.

Since the core inspection, the headteacher has appointed a member of staff as Foundation Phase leader who also has the responsibility for co-ordinating the development of pupils' numeracy skills across the Foundation Phase. Staff have visited other schools and have had valuable support on how to develop pupils' numeracy skills effectively.

Staff and teaching assistants have received useful training in the teaching of mathematics and in how to incorporate the Literacy and Numeracy Framework into their planning. Teachers identify opportunities for pupils to apply their numerical skills when appropriate within all topics and areas of learning. Teachers prioritise numeracy when planning and aim to 'think number first' in trying to bring the quality of planning for numeracy up to the same quality as it is for literacy.

In pupils' books and in the work displayed in classrooms and communal areas, the greater focus on numeracy skills is clear. Foundation Phase pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in a range of topics. For example, they measure the distance flown by paper aeroplanes, present the most popular fruit choice for smoothies accurately in bar charts and use standard units of measure to record what happens to a shadow when a shape moves further away from a light source.

Teachers' planning for topics often identifies purposeful activities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills. However, it does not always take good enough account of pupils' existing numeracy skills and plan to develop them.

Recommendation 4: Improve attendance

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since September 2014, the school has implemented a range of effective strategies to improve pupils' levels of attendance. These include employing a home-school liaison officer, displaying classes' weekly attendance on their classroom doors and rewarding pupils who achieve 100% attendance. It has also introduced an attendance panel, made up of the headteacher, education welfare officer, home-school liaison officer and a school governor. The headteacher monitors attendance rates rigorously and has set high expectations. Parents and pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of good attendance.

From 2012-2013 to 2013-2014, pupils' overall attendance rate improved, but the school remained in the bottom 25% when compared with similar schools. Unverified data provided by the school for this academic year indicates that attendance rates have improved further during this academic year.

Recommendation 5: Embed appropriate performance management arrangements for teaching staff

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Staff at all levels now have appropriate and detailed job descriptions. There is a well-organised staffing structure with suitable lines of accountability. The allocation of teaching and learning responsibilities is clear. There is appropriate distribution of performance management responsibilities across the leadership team. A staffing handbook and a performance management policy set out suitable arrangements for managing staff performance and there are clear procedures in place for managing underperformance. The arrangements include teaching and support staff. All staff understand the systematic calendar of activities that support performance management. Detailed, regular and well-focused lesson observations underpin the process. Lesson observations benefit from the use of agreed criteria, and staff share the outcomes of observations openly and constructively. The performance objectives that stem from the process are relevant and link well to the school's current priorities for development. Staff receive appropriate support and access to relevant training as a result, including opportunities to observe practice of high quality at another school within the regional consortium. Support for the induction and professional development of the new deputy headteacher is particularly strong.

Overall, the performance management process is now well-established and comprehensive. It provides leaders and governors with a good level of assurance in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and the way staff discharge their job roles and responsibilities. Staff receive appropriate feedback and suitable training and development opportunities as a result.

Recommendation 6: Develop the level of challenge provided by the governing body

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The governing body supports the school well and is now beginning to provide improved oversight and a suitable degree of challenge to the work of leaders and managers. The headteacher's reports to the governing body provide appropriate information on relevant matters, including the school's progress in meeting performance targets, its position relative to similar schools, and progress towards meeting the recommendations in the Estyn inspection report. There is a clear structure to the sub-committees of the governing body and they function well. The school performance and improvement sub-committee considers information on pupil performance carefully and asks appropriate questions about the impact of initiatives on standards and the quality of provision.

The governing body has benefitted from linking with governors from another school in the regional consortium. It has recently begun to evaluate its own performance, using the self-evaluation from another school as an initial guide, but the depth of the self-evaluation is limited at present. Governors have begun to benefit from formal links with subject areas and with individual recommendations within the post-inspection action plan. They have undertaken learning walks to review provision in extended writing and mathematics. As a result, governors are better informed and more able to appreciate the life and work of the school, but these activities are relatively recent.

Recommendation 7: Use the outcomes of effective self-evaluation to ensure a clear focus for school improvement

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has established appropriate policies and systems to evaluate its strengths and areas for development. These are at a relatively early stage of development, but they have begun to have a notable impact on improving the quality of provision.

The school's planning for improvement, through the post-inspection action plan, is detailed and thorough. Staff monitor and review systematically the school's progress in delivering agreed actions and improvements. There is regular and careful scrutiny of teachers' planning, including monitoring of weekly plans by phase leaders. The deputy headteacher checks these monitoring activities carefully and provides constructive feedback. Core subject leaders provide overview reports to the headteacher on a termly basis on the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. They consider a suitable sample of evidence when undertaking reviews, including samples of pupils' books, scrutiny of teachers' planning files, learning walks and sessions where they talk to learners.

Members of the leadership team undertake regular classroom observations and provide focused feedback to staff. The school has recently used pupil and parent questionnaires to seek their views on the quality of provision. Action planning has focused primarily on driving forward improvements in English and mathematics. The school acknowledges that progress in science is more limited, but there is a suitable focus on improving science within next year's development plan.

There is a rigorous analysis of data on pupil performance and careful tracking of information on pupils' progress. Teachers in staff meetings have also considered the standards pupils have achieved to moderate their assessments and to exemplify work at different levels. Beyond this, monitoring and review activities tend to focus predominantly on improving the quality of provision. This has enabled the school to improve significantly in many areas of its work. It has also underpinned more consistent delivery of agreed initiatives across the school. However, the monitoring undertaken by phase and subject leaders does not always focus enough on the quality of work that pupils achieve or whether the opportunities extend them fully as they progress through the school, especially in mathematics and numeracy.

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.