



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 monitoring**

**Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School
Merthyr Dyfan Road
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
Vale of Glamorgan
CF62 9YQ**

Date of visit: March 2016

by

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

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The monitoring team

John Thomas	Reporting Inspector
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Outcome of monitoring

Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

Although it is nearly four years since the core inspection, many of the improvements are still at an early stage of development. Progress, particularly in raising standards at key stage 4 in those indicators that include English and mathematics, has been too slow.

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 in about 12 months' time to inspect progress against the recommendations.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Raise standards, particularly in those areas where there is relative underperformance, including English and mathematics at key stage 3

Limited progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in 2012, the school has made strong progress in raising standards at key stage 3. At key stage 4, performance in nearly all key indicators improved in 2013 and 2014 following a sharp dip across many indicators in 2012. However, in 2105 performance deteriorated in key indicators, most notably the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics and the core subject indicator. This is largely due to the particularly low percentage of pupils achieving an A*-C pass in mathematics. In each of these three indicators, performance remains below that in 2011. This is a cause for concern.

At key stage 3, performance in the core subject indicator has improved each year since the core inspection. In 2015, performance in this indicator places the school in the top 25% of similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals. However, performance remains below the average for girls in the family of schools and nationally.

Performance in English at Level 5 and above has improved consistently since 2011. In each of the last three years, performance has been above the average for girls in the family of schools and has placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals. Performance in mathematics at level 5 and above has improved steadily in each of the last three years. In 2015, performance in this indicator places the school in the top 25% of similar schools and above the average for girls in the family for the first time since the core inspection.

In key stage 4, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics fell slightly in 2015. Performance remains lower than at the time of the core inspection and places the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals for the third time in the last four years. It also remains well below the average for girls in the family of schools. Progress in this indicator, since the inspection, has been much slower than the average progress made by similar schools and performance remains below modelled outcomes.

Performance in the level 2 threshold has improved and has been above the average for girls in the family, placing the school in the top 25% of similar schools in each year since the core inspection. However, performance in the core subject indicator dipped sharply in 2012 and remains below the level of attainment at the time of the core inspection. It remains well below the average for girls in the family and has consistently placed the school in the lower 50% or bottom 25% of similar schools since then.

After a dip in 2012, performance in English has improved steadily and for the first time in 2015 is slightly higher than at the time of the core inspection. This places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools after mostly placing it in the lower 50%. However, performance remains below the average for girls in the family. In 2015, performance in mathematics fell. It remains well below the average for girls in the family and lower than at the time of the core inspection. This performance places the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools as has been the case in each year since that inspection. Progress in both English and mathematics has been considerably slower than the average progress made in similar schools, particularly in mathematics.

At key stage 3, outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals have improved significantly at level 5 and above in each of the core subjects. The gap between the performance of these pupils and others has reduced considerably. At key stage 4, outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals have improved in many indicators since the core inspection. Performance of these pupils is above family averages in the majority of indicators and the gap between these pupils and others has reduced in many indicators. However, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains well below that of pupils in similar schools in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, in the core subject indicator and in mathematics.

In 2015, at key stage 3, pupils make better progress from the previous key stage than expected in both English and mathematics. In previous years, progress in all indicators was below expectations. At key stage 4, in those indicators that include English and mathematics, pupils make significantly less progress than expected from the previous key stages.

Recommendation 2: Increase the proportion of excellent and good teaching

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Improving the quality of teaching is a key priority of the school's work. In the last two years senior leaders have undertaken a systematic and extensive programme of lesson observations. Many of these have been carried out together with consortium

challenge advisers or trained peer inspectors from link schools to help ensure accuracy and consistency in the evaluations. Despite these approaches, overall, the quality of teaching has not had enough impact on improving outcomes at key stage 4 since the core inspection.

A common template is used which covers a broad range of aspects. These appropriately include the organisation and management of lessons, teachers' subject knowledge and the effectiveness of planning as well as pupils' progress in learning and development of their skills. Lesson observations offer well-considered evaluations of individual teachers' strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders have used these observations to confirm particular strengths but also to identify the most common areas for improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. However, several areas of these lesson observations are quite descriptive and focus largely on compliance. In many cases, judgements about the quality of teaching are not supported by clear evidence about pupils' progress.

The school has initiated a range of training sessions to support staff professional development and to address those aspects of teaching that require improvement. These include the effective use of questioning and plenary activities. A particular strategy to support improvements in teaching, is the linking of all staff to a cross curricular 'pod', directed by a lead teacher. As part of this strategy, teachers work in pairs observing and reviewing each other's lessons. In several cases, staff with particular expertise in aspects of their work mentor and support other colleagues. Faculty and departmental meetings provide useful opportunities to consider and share effective learning activities. These approaches are contributing to an open and reflective culture and helping to promote best practice more widely.

The school's analysis of outcomes of lesson observations over the last 18 months suggest that there has been an increase in the proportion of teaching judged to be good or better and a reduction in those classes where teaching is adequate. Improved outcomes at key stage 3 and in the majority of subjects at key stage 4 indicate that the school's actions to improve the quality of teaching are having a positive impact. However, since the core inspection these strategies have not had enough impact on pupils' attainment in those key stage 4 indicators that include English and mathematics.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that there is a consistent and systematic whole-school approach to improving pupils' literacy skills

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has made sound progress in implementing suitable strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills.

Each department has responsibility appropriately for developing specific aspects of pupils' skills in line with the national literacy framework. This approach includes developing useful assessment tasks and activities. These tasks allow pupils to practise and improve a range of skills in relevant contexts. Pupils are taught specific literacy skills, rather than simply being provided with opportunities to use them. English teachers and a literacy working party have provided worthwhile support to other staff in developing these approaches.

The school has provided helpful training to assist staff, for example to recognise the range of purposes of the texts that they use in their subject areas. A few departments are beginning to apply these principles well to improve pupils' ability to understand the purpose and improve the structure of their writing. A few departments use worthwhile strategies to help pupils develop their reading skills. Other departments focus predominantly on supporting pupils to develop their oracy skills in context.

The school analyses and uses information from national reading tests and other assessments appropriately to diagnose deficits in pupils' skills. Staff use this information well to determine appropriate interventions to address these weaknesses, for example by producing useful booklets for pupils to use at home or during form periods. Many pupils make sound progress following specific intervention programmes.

Overall, the school's approaches to improving pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum are not consistent enough. They have not had a sufficient impact on raising standards in key indicators at key stage 4.

Recommendation 4: Improve consistency in the quality of marking so that pupils receive clear advice that helps them improve

Limited progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has revised its assessment policy usefully to set out appropriate principles about how teachers should mark pupils' work. It has recently carried out helpful training on effective feedback and shared good practice in cross-curricular working parties and at department level. As a result, it has produced suitable guidance for staff on the characteristics of effective feedback to pupils. However, the majority of departments are at an early stage of developing suitably effective marking practices.

Most teachers mark pupils' written work regularly. In a minority of subjects, teachers provide pupils with an accurate assessment of strengths, and give precise guidance on how to improve specific aspects of their work. However, the quality of teachers' marking varies too much both within and across departments. In the majority of cases, teachers do not give pupils clear guidance to help them improve their work.

In a few cases, pupils respond effectively to the advice given to enhance their work or deepen their understanding. However, too often pupils acknowledge teachers' comments but do not take suitable actions to improve the quality of their work.

Middle leaders monitor the quality of marking in their teams. Lesson observations now also consider appropriately evidence from pupils' books. In a minority of cases, leaders provide helpful suggestions to improve the quality of marking and assessment. However, too often their evaluations of the quality of teachers' written feedback are too generous. Evidence from lesson observations relies too much on the existence of certain features rather than on the quality of the feedback given. Senior leaders do not routinely monitor the work of pupils therefore they do not have a clear enough view of the quality of marking across the school. As a result, leaders at all levels are not able to identify strengths and areas for development effectively enough.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the quality of improvement planning to ensure plans link closely with the findings of self-evaluation and include clear targets for improvement

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has increased its focus on self-evaluation. There is a clear recognition across the school that self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are an important element in the drive to improve standards.

There is a specific programme of activities covering key elements in the self-evaluation and improvement planning cycle that is set out clearly in the school calendar. Self-evaluation arrangements utilise appropriately a broad range of first-hand evidence including lesson observations, book reviews, schemes of work and the views of pupils.

The school self-evaluation report identifies many relevant areas for improvement in outcomes. However, leaders do not compare performance specifically with that of girls in similar schools closely enough. This prevents leaders from making suitably robust evaluations of certain aspects of performance. In other areas of the school's work, the report focuses too much on describing actions undertaken and does not provide enough information as to how well those actions have been carried out or what impact they have had.

The school improvement plan includes realistic and challenging targets for key performance indicators. However, this plan has too many priorities to be able to focus appropriately on key areas for improvement. There is also a lack of clarity as to how a few priorities relate directly to issues identified in the school self-evaluation report.

A supplementary 'Raising Achievement Plan' for 2015-2016 focuses specifically on the school's key priorities. These are to improve performance in mathematics and of pupils eligible for free school meals and to increase rates of attendance. This recent plan provides a useful mechanism for senior leaders and governors to monitor progress closely in these particular areas and to set specific short-term goals.

Departmental development plans follow a consistent format and address the school's key priorities appropriately. Targets in these plans are generally specific and measurable. However, in many cases, priorities identified through self-evaluation and in the school improvement plan are not cross-referenced well enough in departmental action plans.

Despite greater consistency and rigour in improvement planning processes, progress in strengthening key aspects of the school's work has been too slow. There has been good progress in raising standards at key stage 3 and improving outcomes at key stage 4 in those indicators that include a wide range of qualifications. However, planning for improvement has not had enough impact on attainment in those key stage 4 indicators that include English and mathematics.

Recommendations

Overall, progress since the core inspection in improving key areas of the school's work has been too slow. There is greater consistency and rigour in improvement planning processes and a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. However, these strategies have not had enough impact on raising standards, particularly in those key stage 4 indicators that include English and mathematics.

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. In particular, the school should take suitable steps to raise standards at key stage 4 and improve performance in those indicators that include English and mathematics.