



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: special measures**

**Woodlands High School
Vincent Road
Ely
CF5 5AQ**

Date of visit: December 2017

by

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

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Outcome of monitoring

Woodlands High School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in January 2016.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any further follow-up activity.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve pupil standards to make sure all pupils achieve to the best of their ability

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Senior leaders have worked well together to identify and use a tracking system that is appropriate for the needs of pupils at the school. As a result, the school can clearly demonstrate that nearly all pupils are making appropriate progress in all subject areas, including their literacy and numeracy skills. For many pupils this progress is generally in line with individual targets for improvement.

The school is beginning to analyse pupil progress data to draw conclusions on the impact of additional support and to follow up appropriately where pupil progress is less than expected.

The school has continued to improve the accuracy and use of individual education plans (IEPs) for all pupils. Senior leaders maintain a very good overview of the quality of IEPs. They ensure that targets are meaningful for both pupils and staff. Generally, staff now recognise that IEPs are important in outlining the next steps of progress for pupils. The school has clear plans to improve staff confidence in determining appropriate strategies to meet pupils' needs.

The school has begun to work well with other agencies to identify the additional speech, communication and language needs of many of the pupils. Staff work alongside colleagues from the local authority and the health service to plan interventions for pupils. During the follow up visit, many pupils with speech communication and language difficulties were confident in making oral contributions to discussions in both class and whole school settings. Other pupils are respectful and listen attentively.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their independent living skills. However, senior leaders have appropriately identified the need to develop this further, in order to prepare pupils better for their next stage of life and learning.

The school has increased the range of externally accredited courses that older pupils follow and continues with its strong record in securing positive destinations for pupils.

The recently introduced house system provides pupils with opportunities to take on roles with responsibility and to earn points for positive behaviour. Overall, since the core inspection, the behaviour of pupils has improved and fixed term exclusions have reduced significantly.

During the follow up visit, the inspection team noted that nearly all pupils settle quickly and remain focussed throughout, whether it be during lessons or the whole school assembly. With the sensitive and timely support of staff, nearly all pupils are respectful of one another, staff and their environment.

Recommendation 2: Establish clear roles, responsibilities and accountability for senior leaders to bring about improvement

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection in January 2016, there have been significant and frequent changes to the senior leadership team at the school.

Since the beginning of April 2017, the school has been led by an interim headteacher who will remain in post for the remainder of this academic year. In a relatively short time, under her leadership, the school has made significant progress in a number of important areas.

The interim headteacher has taken swift, decisive and sensible actions in many areas of the school's work that has resulted in a much-improved environment for pupils and staff. The two other temporary members of the senior leadership team support the interim headteacher very well. Together, they make wise decisions around which aspects of the school's work to prioritise for improvement. They have worked hard to develop a caring ethos and a supportive culture at the school where nearly all staff feel valued and supported. As a result, there is an enthusiasm and energy within the staff team. Most staff are responding well to the focus on school improvement. They are enthusiastic about their own professional development and the contribution they make to the life of the school.

The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are well defined. They are distributed fairly and proportionately and are understood well by all staff at the school. The school holds a suitable range of useful meetings at regular intervals that have a clear focus on bringing about improvement. Actions from senior leadership meetings are purposeful and responsibilities are clear. Senior leaders routinely follow up these actions in subsequent meetings.

Meetings of the middle leadership team have an appropriate focus on important aspects of the school's work, such as developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital competency and life skills. As a result, middle leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on standards and provision.

Performance management arrangements for all staff are now an established part of the work of the school. Senior leaders challenge underperformance swiftly and robustly. The school's evaluation of performance management demonstrates clearly the positive impact on whole-school attendance and the standards of wellbeing of groups of pupils. However, it is too early to evaluate fully the impact of performance management arrangements on standards, provision and leadership across the school.

The governing body supports the school very well and shows a good understanding of the school's context. The governors have played a substantial role in supporting recent developments in leadership and in the improvements to the school building.

Recommendation 3: Introduce robust quality assurance procedures that lead to an informed self evaluation and relevant school improvement plan

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the school has made considerable improvement in strengthening its quality assurance procedures. The school now has robust and comprehensive procedures in place to monitor its work. Senior leaders collect a wide range of evidence through regular lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, the school has developed a better understanding of pupil standards, the quality of teaching and the impact of learning experiences on pupil outcomes. This means that the school is now able to evaluate effectively its performance and plan purposeful actions to improve.

Leaders consult regularly with staff to gather their views on important aspects of the school's work. Staff now feel that their opinions are given due consideration and that they are making a valuable contribution to the life of the school. For example, teachers and support assistants have provided a valuable contribution to the planning and development of a new whole-school curriculum. The improved learning experiences have resulted in swift improvements in standards of wellbeing of staff and pupils.

The school has made very good progress in providing regular opportunities to gather the views of pupils both informally and formally. Leaders respect pupils' opinions and respond swiftly and purposefully to their ideas. For example, pupils have suggested improvements to the school site, new names for classes and the introduction of a house rewards points system. The contributions that pupils make to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning is developing suitably.

The school recognises that opportunities to gather the views of parents is an area for development and there are well-considered plans to include this in future self-evaluation procedures.

The school self-evaluation report provides an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths. The school's use of data to evaluate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils is developing well. This has allowed leaders to provide suitable interventions in a timely manner including targeted support in literacy for pupils with English as an additional language. However, the report does not specifically highlight areas for improvement.

The school's improvement plan sets out appropriate actions to bring about improvements. Responsibilities for taking action and for monitoring developments are clear and activities contain detail of costs. Senior leaders and governors monitor developments appropriately during the year. However, the plan does not include any milestones for measuring progress other than at the end of the year. As a result, it is not clear in the plan how well the school is achieving its targets.

Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of teaching to make sure that all lessons meet the needs of all pupils

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school continues to implement a suitable range of strategies to improve the quality of teaching across the school. Most staff are engaging well with these initiatives.

Senior leaders use the outcomes of assessment information and pupils' learning profiles well to group pupils according to their learning needs. As a result, the school now provides pupils with a learning experience that is generally well matched to their academic and emotional needs.

The school provides a clear and well-considered annual assessment calendar for staff. Leaders provide new staff with appropriate training and support in relation to teaching and assessment. Senior leaders continue to carry out a range of focussed quality assurance activities that include lesson observations and work scrutiny.

Support staff have received useful training that allows them to take part in the assessment process. In class, they support pupils and teachers very well. They generally have a very good understanding of pupils' needs. This helps them to ensure consistency in supporting pupils in their learning and assisting them in developing appropriate strategies to manage pupils' behaviour.

There is now a shared understanding by all staff, of the value of professional reflection and development. As a result of ongoing training, support and challenge, staff understand fully the role that they play in improving the teaching, learning experiences, and outcomes for all pupils.

Middle leaders are developing their roles in actively supporting the changes to the curriculum across the school. Regular meetings between middle leaders and teachers are used to strengthen planning for skills in lessons. In addition, all staff have been involved in evaluating planning, targetsetting and feedback. As a result, staff are able to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own and others' practice.

Recommendation 5: Address the issues in safeguarding identified during the inspection

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has taken appropriate and timely action to address the issues identified during the core inspection of January 2016. The safety and wellbeing of pupils are a high priority for governors and staff at Woodlands High School.

Staff continue to receive appropriate safeguarding training. They understand how to recognise, report and record any safeguarding concerns. There are updated notices across the school to inform pupils, staff and visitors of the school's safeguarding procedures. Governors review the safeguarding policy regularly.

The school now monitors pupils' attendance at school and on work experience placements appropriately. The acting senior leadership team, link governor and the education welfare service monitor whole school and individual pupil attendance regularly.

The school has introduced detailed risk assessments for the very few pupils attending work experience placements. The risk assessments now include relevant information about pupils on external placements. Staff make suitable contact with work placements to check on pupils' attendance and general wellbeing.

The school's systems for supporting pupil behaviour are developing well. The acting senior leadership team set high expectations of staff and pupils and promote a positive culture of mutual respect at the school. The school has reviewed its approach to using restrictive physical intervention. Intervention reports now contain appropriate detail and there are new systems in place for staff and pupils to reflect on these incidents. A member of the senior leadership team monitors the quality of incident reports and analyses data on behaviour. Senior leaders have used this information well to review and improve practice.

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.