



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**

**Ysgol Gyfun Dyffryn Taf
North Road
Whitland
Carmarthenshire
SA34 0BD**

Date of visit: January 2017

by

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

© Crown Copyright 2017: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

The monitoring team

Hywel Jones	Reporting Inspector
Delyth Lloyd Grey	Team Inspector
Elin Forsyth	Local authority representative

Outcome of monitoring

Ysgol Gyfun Dyffryn Taf is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in October 2013.

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 standards in English, Welsh first language and mathematics at level 2 in key stage 4 and the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection in 2013, the school has made sound progress in improving performance in most of the key indicators in key stage 4.

Following two years of slight improvements, in 2016 the school has made strong progress in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics. This performance, however, continues to place the school in either the bottom 25% or lower 50% of similar schools in terms of eligibility for free school meals for the majority of key indicators.

Performance in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics has improved by nearly thirteen percentage points when compared with that at the time of the core inspection. Despite this improvement, performance remains below modelled outcomes and is below the average for the family of schools. It continues to place the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools based on free-school-meal eligibility.

In 2016, performance in the level 2 threshold shows an improvement for the first time since the core inspection and is above the family average for the first time since 2013. This performance places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools based on free-school-meal eligibility.

Performance in the core subject indicator is over ten percentage points better than at the time of the core inspection. Despite this improvement, the school remains below the average for the family of schools and is in the bottom 25% of similar schools.

Performance in the capped point score improved in 2016. It is at its highest point since the time of the core inspection and is now close to modelled outcomes. However, the school's performance in this indicator remains below the family average, and in the lower 50% of similar schools.

Since the core inspection, attainment in the level 1 threshold has been variable, although, in 2016 it is nearly two percentage points better than at the time of the core inspection and in line with the average for the family.

Performance in English at level 2 in key stage 4 has improved by nearly twelve percentage points since the core inspection. In 2016, this places the school in the upper 50% of similar schools for the first time in four years and close to the average for the family of schools.

Performance in Welsh at level 2 continues to be variable. In 2016, it has fallen below the level achieved at the time of the core inspection. This performance is significantly below the average for the family of schools and continues to place the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools.

In 2016, performance in mathematics at level 2 has improved by over eleven percentage points since the time of the core inspection. However, this continues to place the school in the lower 50% of similar schools and remains well below the family average.

Since the time of the core inspection, the performance of girls has improved steadily in most indicators. In 2016, the performance of boys has improved significantly following the declining trend of the previous three years. However, both boys and girls continue to perform below the average for similar schools.

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has been weak since the time of the core inspection. However, this performance improved significantly in 2016 and places the school above the average for similar pupils in the family of schools.

Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in those subjects where there is relative underperformance.

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection, the school has focused well on improving its practices with regard to teaching, learning and assessment. This has had a positive impact on improving outcomes in key stage 3 and in most of the key indicators in key stage 4.

The school has established robust systems aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning at the school. Senior and middle leaders have revised approaches to lesson observation suitably in order to focus on the progress that pupils make in lessons as well as the quality of the teaching.

Through a comprehensive programme of lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, and their performance in external examinations, leaders at the school are making effective progress in securing the reliability and consistency of judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.

Leaders now ensure that improving teaching and learning is a key focus for all staff. Senior and middle leaders provide a useful overview of strengths and areas for development in order to plan for further improvement in teaching and learning.

The school provides a wide range of valuable professional development activities to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders work collaboratively within the school and with other schools and take advantage of regular and useful opportunities to share good practice.

The school provides clear guidance for staff on how to assess and record pupils' progress and leaders scrutinise pupils' books regularly. 'Fix-it' time in lessons provides useful opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' feedback. However, the rigour of the school's monitoring exercises remains inconsistent and the quality of teacher feedback and pupils' response is too variable.

Recommendation 3: Improve attendance rates.

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has made strong progress in improving attendance rates by over three percentage points since the core inspection. In 2015-2016, attendance rates place the school above the family average and in the higher 50% of similar schools from being in the bottom 25% in 2012-2013.

The school analyses attendance data closely and provides targeted support which has impacted positively on attendance rates for all groups of learners. Bespoke support packages for vulnerable learners, such as interventions from the school councillor and input from outside agencies, have proved to be effective in improving levels of attendance. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved considerably and is now nearly two percentage points higher than that of similar pupils in the family. The number of pupils who are absent persistently has reduced substantially since the time of the core inspection and is now lower than the family, local authority and national averages.

Staff and pupils work well together to track rates of attendance and pupils display a good understanding of the value of good attendance. The school works effectively with parents to improve attendance and offers a wide range of effective incentives, including the 'In 2 Win' reward scheme. As a result, nearly all pupils are aware of their attendance levels and are clear about the school's expectations and procedures.

Recommendation 4: Improve strategic management and ensure that middle managers address aspects of relative underperformance in key areas more effectively.

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the core inspection, the local authority has set up a school improvement panel in order to provide challenge to the school and monitor progress against the recommendations. The school has also set up a school-based core improvement panel to strengthen systems and procedures in order to raise standards. Both panels use a common 'Challenge Framework' to hold leaders and departments more strongly to account for standards. This initiative has been successful in improving outcomes in most key indicators. Governors make useful contributions to local

authority panel meetings and are now involved more effectively in the school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The school's senior leadership team has established robust systems for evaluating and monitoring performance. As a result, the school's capacity to identify key areas for development and to plan for their improvement has strengthened since the time of the core inspection. Senior leaders have increased the degree of challenge and support for middle leaders. Performance data is used consistently and effectively to hold all leaders to account for their work.

Senior and middle leaders communicate well with staff. Regular meetings between line managers and heads of department focus appropriately on whole-school and departmental priorities. In meetings, leaders focus appropriately on first-hand evidence including pupil progress data, book reviews and lesson observations. Nearly all leaders use these processes consistently and purposefully.

The school has ensured successful strategies to develop the strategic capacity of its current and new leaders. For example, the school has invested heavily in ensuring worthwhile professional development opportunities to share good leadership practice amongst staff. Specific teacher-led focus groups ensure positive developments in aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of teaching.

These measures have strongly improved the capacity of leaders to work more strategically. Although there remain a few key areas of relative underperformance, the school has secured improvements in most of the key performance indicators at key stage 4.

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.