



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**

**Croesyceiliog School
Woodland Road
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2YB**

Date of visit: November 2021

by

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

Outcome of visit

Croesyceiliog School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Raise standards at key stage 4, improve pupils' skills and develop their independence and resilience in learning

The previous monitoring visit took place just before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the school's primary focus over the last 21 months has been on supporting the wellbeing of its pupils. Staff have shown high levels of commitment in keeping pupils safe and helping them to settle back into school after periods of lockdown. In spite of this, the school has continued to work hard to raise pupils' achievement and develop their skills, independence and resilience. These efforts have had a positive impact, and the standard of pupils' work is now notably better than at the time of the last monitoring visit.

In lessons, many pupils demonstrate secure recall of previous learning and make sound progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. A minority apply their previous learning to new contexts well and go on to make strong progress.

Most pupils behave well in lessons, listen respectfully to their teachers and peers, and maintain their concentration well. Many are resilient when faced with challenging activities. They show suitable independence in their learning, and routinely look for strategies other than asking the teacher when unsure of how to proceed. These pupils show pride in their work and participate successfully in group and pair activities. A minority demonstrate enthusiasm for their learning. They ask pertinent questions, and collaborate in a mature fashion to support each other's learning. The progress of a very few pupils is limited by lapses in concentration or a reluctance to engage in class activities.

Many pupils involve themselves suitably in whole-class, pair and group discussions, and show a suitable grasp of subject terminology, for example when giving instructions to their peers in physical education. A minority provide highly thoughtful and articulate responses, for example when discussing their first impressions of a character in a novel. A few make only limited contributions and do not express themselves clearly enough.

In many cases, pupils use a suitable range of reading strategies when exploring texts and use inference appropriately. They annotate texts thoughtfully and independently. A minority analyse written material perceptively, for example when evaluating the reliability and utility of historical sources or considering the social and historical context of literary texts.

Many pupils demonstrate suitable technical accuracy and a secure sense of audience and purpose when writing in a range of styles, including explanations, instructions and discursive writing. A minority produce well-structured and mature extended writing using a wide vocabulary, for example when composing a persuasive speech to argue for restrictions on child labour in the nineteenth century. Although lower-ability pupils often make basic spelling and punctuation errors, in general they show good control of their writing.

In many instances, pupils demonstrate sound basic number skills and secure mental arithmetic. In general, more able and middle-ability pupils are able to apply their skills to new contexts well, for example by calculating the length, perimeter and area of shapes in algebraic form. The majority of lower-ability pupils complete calculations using the four rules of number appropriately. A very few pupils have weak numeracy skills, and struggle to perform even basic calculations. In general, pupils apply their numeracy skills suitably across the curriculum, for example when they calculate the acceleration of a rocket from the upward thrust and mass. More able pupils construct graphs precisely and use them to analyse data well. The majority of pupils, however, are not consistently accurate enough in their graph work and do not make sufficient use of them to interpret results.

R2. Improve the quality of teaching

Since the last monitoring visit, when the school was placed into special measures, it has developed a more strategic and focused approach to improving teaching. A carefully planned programme of professional learning activities has targeted the most important shortcomings. The school has provided valuable opportunities for staff to share good practice, both within and between subject areas. In addition, it has made good use of partnership work to enhance classroom practice. As a result of these strategies, teaching has improved substantially since the last monitoring visit.

In the many lessons where teaching is effective, teachers build positive working relationships with their classes. They have high expectations regarding behaviour, engagement, presentation and independence in learning. These teachers plan carefully sequences of activities that build on each other and increase the level of challenge to support progress well. They monitor progress carefully, provide helpful verbal feedback and are swift to address misconceptions. In these lessons, teachers use questioning suitably to check pupils' understanding, and give them appropriate time and encouragement to respond. In a minority of cases, teachers use questioning skilfully to extend pupils' thinking.

In a few instances, teachers do not plan well enough for the full range of pupils' needs. In these lessons, they ask too many closed questions that check factual recall but do not challenge pupils' thinking or develop their understanding sufficiently well. They do not monitor progress closely enough, and this hampers their ability to correct misunderstandings or challenge any lack of engagement.

Many teachers provide pupils with helpful guidance and ensure that they make meaningful responses to their feedback. In a minority of instances, pupils make substantial improvements to their work under their teachers' guidance. In a few cases, pupils either fail to respond, or make only superficial additions to their work.

R3. Improve attendance

Following the core inspection, the school strengthened its approach to improving attendance. As a result, it improved and was above expectations in 2019. This was a positive feature of the school's work during the last monitoring visit. During the pandemic, the school has continued to use a range of strategies to support attendance, particularly that of the most vulnerable pupils.

The school promotes the importance of good attendance effectively. Tutors discuss attendance regularly during form periods and high attendance is celebrated in weekly year group assemblies.

Senior and middle leaders monitor and analyse attendance data carefully to identify concerns and to provide purposeful support for individual and groups of pupils. The school has identified that persistent absenteeism remains high, and is working closely with external agencies to provide suitable interventions to address this. For example, it has selected a group of vulnerable pupils to take part in a dog therapy programme to help remove barriers to attendance. In addition, the school works well with cluster primary schools to identify pupils who are at risk of persistent absenteeism and to implement worthwhile additional transition activities.

Senior leaders set suitable targets for improvement in this aspect of the school's work, and evaluate progress against these targets thoroughly.

R4. Strengthen leadership at all levels

Since her appointment shortly before the pandemic, the executive headteacher has established and communicated clearly a strong vision for improvement. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, her ambition and determination are understood well and accepted by all staff and the governing body. In a timely combination, the partnership with a high-achieving secondary school, the move to a new build and the return to face-to-face learning after lockdown have presented a unique opportunity to reinforce the headteacher's high expectations. Most staff, both new and long-standing, engage purposefully with and are excited by the opportunities available to support the school's improvement journey.

The senior team model effective leadership behaviours and promote professional values for both leaders and teachers. As a result, leaders across the school have a clear understanding of their roles, and many now lead their areas of responsibility effectively. The school has ensured that lines of accountability are explicit with a firm focus on the quality of teaching, pupil progress and wellbeing. Senior leaders provide beneficial support and challenge to those whom they line manage. They have introduced a range of worthwhile activities, such as peer review. These activities help directors of faculty and lead practitioners to collaborate effectively to identify strengths and tackle aspects in need of improvement.

The school has strengthened performance management arrangements successfully. These now focus explicitly on raising standards and enhancing provision, and link clearly to whole-school priorities. The school has planned useful professional learning opportunities to support the drive for improvements in teaching and leadership.

In general, the governing body have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They participate purposefully in setting the school's strategic direction, provide the school with valuable support and are starting to challenge leaders robustly.

Overall, improvements in leadership have had a positive impact on nearly all areas of the school's work, including attendance, raising standards, improving the quality of teaching, and strengthening arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning.

R5. Strengthen arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning, in particular the role played by middle leaders in this aspect of the school's work

The school's arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning have been strengthened notably since the last monitoring visit. Leaders at all levels now have a clear and realistic picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Although there remains some variation in how effectively these processes are carried out by middle leaders, overall, strengthened arrangements have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, and pupils' progress and wellbeing.

The executive headteacher has provided leaders at all levels with valuable direction and guidance on developing improvement processes. Many middle leaders now have a clear understanding of their role in improving quality. They consider a wide range of relevant evidence and focus closely on the impact of provision on standards. Whole-school 'peer reviews' involve all practitioners in a comprehensive examination of pupils' work. This helps to share good practice and enables leaders to identify precise targets for improvement. Middle leaders are supported and challenged suitably by their line managers to act on their self-evaluation findings in a timely fashion. However, a few middle leaders do not identify strengths and areas for development precisely enough, partly because their evaluations focus on actions rather than their impact on standards.

All teachers at the school are involved in peer enquiry cycles. This helps them to work collaboratively on personal and departmental improvement objectives within the framework of whole-school processes. These activities are linked appropriately to the performance management process. As a result, they help drive the school's improvement priorities forward while helping staff to become reflective practitioners.

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