



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**

**Milford Haven School
Steynton Road
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 1AE**

Date of visit: October 2021

by

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

Outcome of visit

Milford Haven 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 significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Raise standards at key stage 4 and improve the progress made by all pupils in lessons, in particular their development of literacy and numeracy skills

Since the core inspection, and despite exceptional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils' standards have generally improved. In most lessons, pupils develop their skills and subject knowledge well. Many pupils listen respectfully to their teachers and one another. Most have a sound general and subject specific vocabulary and communicate verbally with suitable clarity and fluency. In a few cases, pupils offer well-considered, extended responses to their teachers' questions.

In many lessons, pupils recall prior learning accurately and build on this effectively. They apply their subject knowledge appropriately and develop their thinking skills well. In a few cases, they make valuable cross-curricular links, for example when studying 'Hook's law' in science and making 'lucky racer' cars in their design and technology lessons.

In many cases, pupils use basic reading skills such as skimming and scanning texts to locate relevant information effectively. A majority can make suitable inferences from written sources. In a few cases, pupils synthesise information from a range of sources, for example when considering the roles of soothsayers and wise women when studying the development of medicine through time in history lessons.

Many pupils communicate their ideas clearly in their written work. The majority have a competent grasp of grammatical rules and spelling. In most subjects, pupils produce extended pieces of writing with the appropriate tone for their specific audience. For example, in their English lessons, they respond thoughtfully to contentious topics such as whether or not capital punishment should be re-introduced in the UK. Many structure their writing well, although a few do not organise their work into paragraphs appropriately.

Overall, pupils develop their basic numeracy skills well. When appropriate, many apply these skills competently in a range of contexts across the curriculum, for example when interpreting information from an infographic on mountain ranges. A majority are able to recognise patterns in data well and construct graphs with appropriate scales and lines of best-fit. As they progress through the school, a minority of pupils develop their ability to use formulae, for example when calculating acceleration in their physics lessons.

R2. Improve pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning

Since the core inspection and considering the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all staff in the school have worked effectively to keep pupils safe and support their wellbeing. The school has refined and strengthened its wellbeing provision and this has had a positive impact on behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance. Leaders have restructured the wellbeing team thoughtfully. As a result, there are clear lines of accountability, and individual roles and responsibilities within this team are well understood. Leaders have developed a worthwhile reward and celebration structure to recognise pupils who meet the school's high expectations of behaviour and attendance.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has established clearer expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. There is now a coherent strategy to ensure positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. Many staff implement this strategy consistently. As a result, most pupils now behave well in class and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, in a few cases, teachers do not have high enough expectations of how pupils conduct themselves in lessons. They allow pupils to talk amongst themselves when they are giving instructions or tolerate low level disruption. A few incidents of poor behaviour in corridors were seen during the monitoring visit. The school has been successful in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions and they remain low. Staff identify pupils in need of specific academic and wellbeing support and provide appropriate interventions for them. Provision at the 'Hafan', 'Bay' and 'Harbour' rooms, and the 'Really-Pro' centre allows these pupils to learn in a nurturing and caring environment.

The school has taken suitable steps to address poor attendance and punctuality. Most pupils arrive to lessons punctually, settle quickly and are ready to learn. Pastoral staff analyse attendance data suitably to identify any patterns of poor attendance. They meet regularly to identify and support students with significantly poor attendance and punctuality, and those at risk of disengagement.

Leaders listen to pupils' views and adapt certain aspects of provision accordingly. For example, pupils told leaders that they wanted a system of peer support. The school therefore trained groups of pupils to act as mentors to support peers with various issues such as bullying or harassment.

R3. Improve the quality of teaching

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened its approach to improving the quality of teaching across the school. It has developed an increasingly reflective culture and leaders have provided staff with a range of useful opportunities to share good practice. They have developed a worthwhile programme of whole-school training and offer individual support where necessary. These developments have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching.

In most instances, teachers foster strong working relationships with pupils, and many have high expectations of their effort and behaviour. In many lessons, teachers ensure that pupils settle quickly to their learning and sustain their concentration and engagement.

Many teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects. They have suitable expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan a variety of engaging activities that promote pupil progress. These activities build well on prior learning and are supported by carefully prepared, attractive learning resources. Many teachers provide appropriate opportunities and time for pupils to explore, share and develop their ideas and understanding.

In the very few highly effective lessons, teachers have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They ask incisive questions and plan their lessons meticulously to ensure a progressive level of challenge. These aspects foster high levels of pupil engagement and ensure a brisk pace to their learning.

In a few lessons, teachers do not plan lessons carefully enough to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress. In these lessons, teachers plan repetitive tasks that do not challenge pupils well enough or do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. A few classrooms are in a poor state of decorative repair, and this impacts negatively on pupils' learning environment.

In most lessons, teachers provide pupils with useful verbal feedback in a timely and supportive manner. Many teachers offer pupils useful written feedback and additional 'upgrade' tasks that provide opportunities for them to improve their work. These teachers ensure that pupils engage well with follow-up tasks to develop specific aspects of their work.

R4. Strengthen the planning for the development of pupils' skills

Since the core inspection, the school has strengthened substantially its approach to the development of pupils' skills. The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have developed a well-considered approach to support staff in their planning. This includes comprehensive skill audits, careful analyses of standardised test outcomes and specific training. As a result, there is now a coordinated approach to the progressive development of skills across the curriculum. In key stage 3, the school organises two separate weeks of useful activities focused specifically on developing pupils' skills. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Many directors of learning plan useful opportunities for skills development in their schemes of learning. They use common approaches, such as encouraging pupils to articulate their ideas verbally before writing, and 'cold and hot tasks' where pupils respond quickly to a written task and then refine their writing in line with specific success criteria that they construct with their teachers. Areas of learning that use numeracy frequently are beginning to promote the use of common techniques such as 'bar-modelling' so pupils have a visual representation of proportion when solving problems, and common methods of constructing graphs and lines of best fit. During the pandemic, most staff made great strides in their understanding of how to use digital technology to enhance pupils' learning. Since this time, they have begun to identify beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' digital skills across the curriculum. For example, in their citizenship lessons they use spreadsheets to collect financial data and represent this in graphical form. Directors of learning track pupils' progress in different skills closely to plan interventions and evaluate the impact of their provision.

R5. Improve the quality and impact of leadership, particularly through the strengthening of arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning

Since her appointment in April 2018, the headteacher has implemented a range of well-considered strategies to develop the effectiveness of leadership in the school. These include a strategic restructure of leadership across the school to ensure clear lines of accountability for key improvement priorities. The headteacher has refined roles and responsibilities within the senior and middle leadership teams. This has led to improvements in important areas such as pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and teaching.

The school has established a clear line management structure which is supporting leaders to hold staff to account for the quality of their work. Line management meetings follow a common agreed agenda which focuses usefully on pupils' progress and the school improvement priorities. Senior leaders support and challenge middle leaders appropriately. The school has suitable arrangements in place for performance management. Targets are sensible and linked closely to the school improvement priorities and professional learning opportunities.

The school has a well-considered schedule of quality assurance activities, including a range of opportunities to gather first-hand evidence. Middle leaders gather useful evidence through activities such as lesson observations, data analysis, scrutiny of pupils' work and listening to pupils. As a result, many middle leaders have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility. However, when evaluating teaching, leaders do not always focus sharply enough on its impact on pupils' progress and skills. They find it difficult to identify specific improvement priorities in teaching.

The school is continuing to develop its relationship with the local community. During the lockdown period, the school worked closely with families to look after pupils' wellbeing and help them return as the school re-opened. Links with parents have strengthened to provide a range of opportunities for them to share their views with the school. The sense of a close and supportive community and team ethos are now strong aspects of life at Milford Haven School.

As a result of beneficial training given to the governing body by senior leaders at the school, governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They are beginning to hold the school to account through a structure of committees, which focus on the school's improvement priorities.

R6. Address the deficit budget

The school has taken appropriate action to address the deficit budget. In 2018, leaders produced a three-year medium-term financial recovery plan to return the school to a balanced budget in 2020. This included an agreement with the local authority for a licensed deficit. The plan was successful in allowing the school to ensure a small budget surplus in 2020. The school had a budget surplus in 2021 due in part to savings made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school prioritised key areas for investment including securing digital resources to benefit all pupils.

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