



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

## **Report following monitoring**

**Level of follow-up: Significant improvement**

**Ynyshir Primary School**

**Llanwonno Road  
Ynyshir  
Porth  
RCT  
CF39 0HU**

**Date of visit: December 2024**

**by**

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

## Outcome of visit

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

As a result, His 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. Ensure that self-evaluation and improvement actions focus sharply on their impact on improving pupils' standards, in particular, their skills in reading, writing and the Welsh language**

Since the core inspection, a new headteacher has taken up his post. There is a refreshed, reconstituted senior leadership team. The new headteacher has worked with staff and leaders to galvanise morale and continue to focus on the ongoing improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Carefully planned monitoring activities result in prompt, helpful feedback. This supports staff to improve their professional practice. Regular staff meetings focus tightly on teaching and learning. Leaders make worthwhile use of data to inform the recently instigated pupil progress meetings with individual teachers. These identify, for example, pupils at risk of falling behind, and support the developing culture of accountability. These improvements are still at an early stage; nevertheless, they have clearly sharpened the current focus of monitoring and self-evaluation work, and accelerated pupils' progress in reading and writing.

There have also been changes to the governing body. Governors have received support from the local authority to improve the quality of their challenge and support. As a result, governors have a realistic and proportionate understanding of the success of the school's recent improvements and understand the challenge of building on the progress further.

Staff across the school have implemented a strengthened, systematic and progressive approach to teaching phonics, spelling and reading. Pupils enjoy the structure and clear expectations of these daily sessions. Most pupils in the younger classes get off to a good start in beginning to learn to read and write, for example recognising the sounds that letters and letter strings make. By Year 6, most read straightforward texts accurately and many develop the skills that they need to understand and explore texts in depth, for example scanning texts to locate information and inferring meaning beyond the literal.

Teachers and leaders make good use of their assessments and a range of reading test data, for example to identify progress and to support the next steps in pupils' learning. However, leaders rightly recognise that, although progress over the past year has been rapid and the gap has narrowed notably, currently around a half of pupils' reading is not as good as it could or should be.

Teachers develop pupils' vocabulary, speaking and listening skills well. This strong provision for oracy supports most pupils in the older classes to begin to catch up to the expected levels in their writing. Furthermore, a systematic approach to teaching writing, through a carefully-thought-through series of well-structured lessons, has led to notable improvements to the quality of most older pupils' English writing. Leaders have correctly identified the need to develop further purposeful opportunities for pupils to use and apply their writing skills across all areas of their learning.

Throughout the school, pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. In general, teachers model the language enthusiastically and, as a result, pupils engage well in their learning. In the younger classes, where Welsh is integral to daily activities, most pupils make swift progress in the development of their Welsh language skills. However, as pupils move through the school and Welsh becomes confined to formal Welsh sessions, their progress slows. This means that, despite older pupils' positive attitudes, they do not yet achieve as well as they could.

## **R2. Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able**

Teachers share a clearer understanding of how to ensure that teaching is engaging and provides a more suitable level of challenge for all pupils. Nearly all teachers take time to plan carefully focused learning objectives and clear success criteria. These help pupils to understand what they need to do to succeed in their learning. As a result, pupils engage enthusiastically in their lessons. This has supported teachers to raise their expectations of what their pupils can achieve.

Most teachers use questioning and adapt the pace effectively to ensure that pupils are fully engaged in learning. In the best examples, teachers select well-chosen questions that challenge their pupils to think more deeply about their learning. Teachers observe the progress that pupils make closely within lessons. They skilfully recognise when to intervene during lessons, to maximise pupils' progress. For example, they address misconceptions, or challenge pupils' thinking further.

Across the school, teachers benefit from professional learning to develop their understanding of the expectations of pupils' progress, particularly in reading, phonics and writing. This supports teachers to target their teaching more precisely at the next steps that pupils need. For example, a structured 'golden hour' each morning provides a scaffold of carefully planned activities that develop pupils' basic literacy skills at an appropriate level.

In language and mathematics lessons, teachers plan purposeful ‘chilli challenges’ that meet pupils’ differing stages of learning well. They then support pupils to select the challenge that best meets their needs. This creates a learning environment where pupils relish challenge and are not afraid to make mistakes. However, in other areas of the curriculum, this good practice is at an earlier stage of development. As a result, teachers do not always encourage pupils of all abilities to apply their skills at a high enough level across the curriculum.

Staff across the school have developed a shared understanding of feedback to pupils, and how this can raise their expectations of pupils’ outcomes. Often, verbal feedback is highly effective in promoting pupils’ progress, albeit from low starting points. Staff meet regularly to discuss and compare feedback in books. This is beginning to provide consistency across the school and raise expectations of older pupils’ written work.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. For example, they expect pupils to move between activities swiftly and purposefully, so that no time is wasted. In the younger classes, pupils exercise choice when moving between learning areas. Older pupils are beginning to have some input into what they learn. However, many activities remain heavily teacher led and opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn are at an early stage.

### **R3. Improve attendance, particularly for pupils eligible for free school meals**

Since the core inspection, leaders and staff have worked diligently to establish robust and effective systems and processes that promote, support and celebrate good levels of attendance. Leaders have comprehensive oversight of the school’s attendance rates and trends, and act sensibly and proportionately when addressing any concerns.

Current attendance rates, including those of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, are strong. Most pupils attend Ynyshir Primary School regularly, happily and on time. The school has successfully ensured that there is very little difference between the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their peers. Many pupils with additional learning needs attend school regularly. The school is aware of the need for individual pupils with additional needs to attend valuable specialist support and treatment outside of school.

The school has a purposeful working relationship with the local authority’s Attendance and Well-being Service (AWS). Effective partnership work with the AWS helps the school to address any concerns relating to pupils’ attendance and punctuality well. For instance, home visits help to establish lines of communication with hard-to-reach families and register checks confirm the school’s compliance with regulations. Good relationships between the school and parents are helping to break

down the barriers to good attendance, and overall, parents support the school's work to improve daily attendance rates well.

Across the school, pupils are happy and confident learners. Improvements to the quality of teaching, alongside a strong culture of positive well-being, support most pupils to enjoy their time in school and to readily engage in their learning. Most pupils' overall contentment with their experiences in school entuses them to attend school regularly.