



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

**Porth Community School
Cemetery Road
Porth
Rhonddds Cynon Taf
CF39 0BS**

Date of visit: June 2022

by

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

Outcome of visit

Porth Community 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 across the school including improving pupils' skills

Since the core inspection, the standards of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the progress they make have improved notably. Despite the challenges the school faced during periods of lockdown and as a result of the ongoing pandemic, staff have remained committed to ensuring their work has a positive impact on pupils' learning and engagement.

Most pupils begin Porth Community School with levels of understanding and skills that are below those expected for their age. Despite this, many pupils recall prior learning suitably and go on to make at least appropriate progress. The majority of pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. These pupils apply their knowledge and skills confidently to a range of interesting contexts. In a few instances, where work does not engage or challenge pupils sufficiently, they make limited progress.

Many pupils listen actively to their teachers and respond promptly to instructions. They provide suitable responses to teachers' questions and often justify their answers. Many pupils use an appropriate range of vocabulary to talk about their learning and to engage in class and group discussions. A few pupils offer only brief and underdeveloped verbal responses.

The majority of pupils have sound reading skills and are able to select relevant information from a range of reading texts. They use their reading skills well such as when skimming and scanning to locate important information in simple texts. A minority of pupils use inference and deduction effectively, for example when considering how John Boyega reflects on his vulnerability in a speech about Black Lives Matter. Many pupils produce well-structured pieces of writing for a range of purposes with a suitable sense of audience and they use a good range of vocabulary to engage the reader. A minority of pupils make careless, repeated errors in their spelling, punctuation, and grammar and a few produce only brief and underdeveloped pieces of writing.

Many pupils have a good grasp of number and use the four operations appropriately. They apply their mathematical knowledge and skills suitably to convert between fractions and percentages and to find missing angles in shapes. They draw accurate graphs to display a range of data and the majority of pupils analyse these graphs sufficiently. In a few cases, pupils have difficulty applying their number skills

in more challenging contexts. Pupils' digital skills have developed appropriately, for example, they work confidently to construct spreadsheets and produce animations.

In the youngest year groups, many pupils develop strong independent learning skills and develop their fine motor skills appropriately, for example when threading objects to improve their counting skills. The majority of pupils across the school have sound problem solving skills and apply their physical and creative skills appropriately. work.

Most pupils behave well in sessions and around the school. They show high levels of respect for their teachers and peers and are keen to improve their work. The majority of pupils are resilient and persist when work becomes difficult. A few pupils are too passive or distracted from their learning, this is often because teaching does not challenge or engage them sufficiently.

R2. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

Since the core inspection the school has improved the effectiveness of teaching and assessment. The learning and teaching strategy, 'Challenge for All' sets out a sensible, simple and clear approach to improving teaching which focuses on key priorities and is well understood by staff.

Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of pupils. They drive learning with pace and determination, focus on improving the language skills of pupils and monitor learning closely. They ask probing questions and do not accept simple responses. These teachers skilfully meet the needs of all pupils through the provision of ambitious and challenging tasks combined with well-considered support. For example, pupils in Year 7 are challenged and supported using thoughtfully structured tasks to discuss how characters feelings are expressed in the play Hamlet.

Most staff foster strong working relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well. Many teachers use questioning suitably to test recall and understanding. They also use praise and encouragement well to help learners make progress. For example, primary age pupils are encouraged to celebrate their successes by posting their achievements on a Proud Cloud.

The majority of teachers provide purposeful learning experiences and plan sessions that cater well for the needs of all pupils. They use tasks to enthuse, challenge and motivate pupils to make progress. This helps pupils develop confidence to work independently and make decisions about their learning. When required, learning support assistants provide strong support for pupils with weaker skills.

In the minority of cases, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Their planning is overly focused on activities and tasks rather than considering what pupils will learn. They engage pupils in low level tasks and do not structure learning appropriately. These teachers do not explain what they expect pupils to do with enough clarity or model examples of good work. In addition, they do not monitor the progress of pupils in lessons well enough, particularly when pupils are engaged in group work. This can mean that the pace of learning is too slow, and pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make progress.

The majority of teachers provide useful verbal and written feedback to pupils about their work. This includes encouraging pupils to address mistakes and

misconceptions. Pupils respond well to this feedback and improve their work as a result. In a minority of cases, feedback does not provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve. This is because it is often solely focused on correcting spelling and grammar rather than supporting pupils knowledge, skills and understanding.

R3. Strengthen the provision for progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum

Since the core inspection the school has developed and implemented a worthwhile strategic plan to improve the provision for skills across the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators work effectively to promote a consistent approach to improve pupils' skills. The school uses their 'skills progression charts' effectively to plan for progress across the school. The provision for pupils' digital skills is in the early stages of development.

Leaders have worked well with staff to support the planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills. As a result, teachers across all ages now plan purposefully to support the development of skills. However, afternoon activities for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 do not always allow pupils to develop or apply their skills sufficiently. As a result, pupils often make limited progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in these sessions.

Staff have received beneficial professional learning on teaching strategies to help develop pupils' skills, such as on teaching pupils to use their inference and deduction skills when analysing texts. The school has also provided useful literacy and numeracy handbooks to support a consistent approach to teaching of skills across the curriculum.

The school uses assessment data effectively to determine pupils' baseline and identify those who need additional support. The school provides these pupils with effective interventions, and many of them make strong progress from their starting point.

The school is developing a positive Welsh ethos. This is supported by an increasing use of the Welsh language throughout the school. All pupils are now provided with an opportunity to study Welsh up to the age of 16.

R4. Improve pupils' attendance

The school has a clear strategy for improving pupil attendance and wellbeing. The development of the school wellbeing team has strengthened the school's capacity to improve attendance. Since the core inspection and despite the pandemic, pupils' overall attendance has improved.

Leaders monitor and track pupil attendance and wellbeing robustly. This information is used effectively to ensure that appropriate intervention supports vulnerable pupils well. For example, the school nurture provisions for primary and secondary age pupils provides highly effective support to help them to re-engage in learning. Leaders have focussed closely on reducing persistent absence. They review attendance regularly and plan appropriate support. Individual attendance plans have a positive impact on improving targeted pupils' attendance.

The school provides mentoring support for specific groups of pupils and makes use of suitable rewards for good attendance. These have had a positive impact on pupils' engagement and punctuality. For example, primary age pupils enjoy the opportunity to take 'Eddy the Attendance Teddy' home as a reward for strong attendance. Pastoral staff work in partnership with families to provide beneficial support to overcome barriers to good attendance.

R5. Improve leadership at all levels

Since the core inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have planned and implemented many effective strategies to address the shortcomings identified. They continued to provide sound leadership throughout the pandemic and maintained a clear focus on securing improvements throughout. As a result, the school has made improvements in many important areas such as teaching, attendance and leadership.

The school's leadership structure is now stable. The headteacher has identified and developed leaders skilfully at all levels, and responsibilities are distributed suitably. Senior leaders understand their roles and work well together to share and implement their vision and direction for the school. Lines of accountability are now clear and supported well by the school's performance management arrangements. Line management meetings and departmental meetings focus well on teaching and learning with clear action points that are followed up appropriately. This supports leaders at all levels to hold others to account. Most middle leaders now provide confident leadership to their areas of learning and understand fully their responsibility in driving improvements.

Leaders have adapted and refined processes for evaluating the school's work. They make sophisticated use of internal data to inform their self-evaluation and the next steps for improvement. Self-evaluation activities such as lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny all focus on specific aspects and give a clear indication of the overall strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. However, they do not always focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Consequently, at times leaders have an overly positive view of a few areas of the school's work.

The school considers and responds well to the views of pupils about how they can improve their learning experiences. This includes the pupils in the 'Teaching and learning group' developing the non-negotiables for teaching which are incorporated in the staff handbook.

Leaders plan for improvement at a whole school and departmental level with more precision than at the time of the core inspection. As a result, the school has seen improvements in pupils' attendance and the quality of teaching. A wide range of professional learning activities have impacted positively on the ability and understanding of leaders to carry out their responsibilities. This included targeted support for leaders and bespoke professional learning where staff share good practice across the school and with external partners. This has contributed well to improvements such as in the planning for progression of pupils' skills.

Governors are supportive of the school and provide suitably robust challenge to leaders. They are directly involved with the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. For example, a few governors gather first-hand evidence from listening to pupils and report back to the full governing body. They generally have a strong grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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