



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**

**Newtown High School
Dolfor Road
Newtown
Powys
SY16 1JE**

Date of visit: February 2018

by

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

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The monitoring team

Jayne Edwards	Reporting Inspector
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Outcome of monitoring

Newtown High School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2015.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is increasing the level of follow-up activity.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school in about three months' time to inspect progress against the recommendations.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve performance at key stage 4 in the indicators that include English and mathematics

No judgement applied

Since the core inspection, the school has not made sufficient and sustained improvement at key stage 4 in the indicators that include English and mathematics. In 2017, key stage 4 performance does not compare well with that in similar schools and is lower than at the time of the core inspection in nearly all indicators. In addition, pupils make significantly less progress than expected in many indicators.

In each year since the core inspection, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has been below expectation and is well below in 2017. Performance in English and mathematics at level 2 has also declined since the core inspection and does not compare favourably with that in similar schools.

The performance of boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals improved immediately following the core inspection but declined in 2017 and is below that of the same groups of pupils in similar schools.

In lessons, many pupils are attentive and engage appropriately in their learning. They demonstrate sound recall of prior learning and apply this to new contexts suitably. However, many pupils of all abilities do not make enough progress, frequently due to insufficient challenge in lessons.

A minority of pupils contribute to discussions suitably and respond appropriately to questions using subject specific language. A few express their views fluently. For example, in religious education, pupils discuss thoughtfully the spiritual significance of the city of Varanasi and the purpose of holy pilgrimages. However, a minority of pupils lack confidence in their verbal skills and either read out written answers or provide brief, underdeveloped responses.

The majority of pupils produce writing that is technically secure. A few pupils produce writing that demonstrates a suitable understanding of purpose. For example, they write persuasively to explain why Henry VIII should be permitted to divorce Catherine of Aragon. However, though many understand the purpose of their writing, only a few have a secure sense of audience. Consequently, many make incorrect language choices and their writing lacks the correct tone. The majority of pupils provide brief, underdeveloped written responses to questions and make too many basic errors in their work. Many pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for improving the content, technical accuracy and presentation of their work before they hand it in to teachers. Very few pupils respond purposefully to feedback from teachers.

The majority of pupils read successfully for understanding. A few pupils use inference suitably to interpret meaning in text. For instance, they interpret appropriately the way in which Dickens presents Scrooge in A Christmas Carol.

The majority of pupils produce accurate and suitably presented graphs and charts to record and compare numerical information. For example, in geography, pupils draw suitable graphs to compare weather and climate across Britain. The majority of pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) to present their work appropriately. For instance, they create presentations competently on Christian and Hindu beliefs. However, overall, pupils' skills in numeracy and ICT are underdeveloped.

Recommendation 2: Improve attendance and reduce fixed term exclusions

No judgement applied

Since the core inspection, the school has introduced a range of appropriate strategies to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour. These include a suitable rewards system to encourage good attendance and an effective behaviour management system to address instances of poor behaviour.

Overall, since the time of the core inspection attendance has improved. Strategies to improve attendance were particularly successful between 2014 and 2016. However, attendance fell in 2017 and although it remains better than at the time of the core inspection, it is below expectations and does not compare favourably with that in similar schools. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals improved between 2014 and 2016 but fell in 2017 and does not compare favourably to that in similar schools.

The school has recently strengthened procedures for managing pupil behaviour. A suitable stepped approach to behaviour management has been introduced, following consultation with pupils. It is beginning to have a positive impact on behaviour in lessons and around the school. However, the implementation of the policy is too variable. The number of fixed term exclusions has reduced slightly since the core inspection.

Recommendation 3: Improve provision for developing pupils' numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum

No judgement applied

The school has very recently strengthened appropriately its provision for developing pupils' numeracy, as well as ICT skills. However, in general, the provision for improving their numeracy skills has not had sufficient impact on pupils' standards.

In a minority of subjects, there are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, particularly using data and drawing and interpreting graphs. For example, in science, Year 7 pupils investigate the impact on penguins' body temperatures when they cluster together. The school also provides pupils with a few valuable opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. In geography, Year 8 pupils use climatic data well to consider why people choose a particular location to live in or to go on holiday. However, this aspect of numeracy provision is underdeveloped. Pupils do not currently have sufficient worthwhile opportunities to develop these skills, either within their mathematics lessons or in other subjects.

Leaders use data from a range of external tests appropriately to identify those pupils who require support in developing their basic numeracy skills. These pupils follow very recently introduced individualised programmes to help them to improve these skills. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these programmes.

The school is implementing beneficial initiatives to develop pupils' ICT skills. The majority of subjects offer pupils relevant opportunities to develop these skills, especially their presentation skills. The 'pupil dashboard' provides pupils with valuable opportunities to engage with digital applications that help to prepare them suitably for real-life situations, such as using mobile technology to record rewards for attendance and behaviour. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their data and logical problem solving skills.

Recommendation 4: Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

No judgement applied

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented an appropriate range of initiatives to attempt to improve the quality of teaching. However, teachers have not implemented these consistently enough and teaching has not had enough impact on pupils' progress, their skills or the standards they achieve.

Senior leaders and staff have identified an agreed set of common expectations for all lessons. Most teachers understand how they can use the guidance on effective lessons to help them with their planning. This approach provides a useful basis for modelling and promoting effective practice and helps leaders identify those staff who need support to improve the quality of their teaching. The school has organised worthwhile training to support staff to implement particular teaching strategies, for example the use of effective questioning and group work.

In many lessons, there are constructive and supportive working relationships between teachers and pupils. In around half of lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and use a range of engaging resources that help pupils to gain a secure understanding of new concepts and topics. In these lessons, teachers focus suitably on helping pupils to extend their subject-specific vocabulary.

In around half of lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. The pace of learning is too slow and the level of challenge not high enough. The questioning skills of the majority of teachers are underdeveloped. These teachers do not probe and extend pupils' understanding or challenge them sufficiently to think carefully and develop their verbal responses.

Many teachers provide helpful verbal advice, for example to clarify or reinforce pupils' understanding. The school has refined its marking and assessment policy to focus directly on ensuring teachers provide clear feedback that identifies specifically how pupils can improve their work. However, the majority of written feedback does not provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. Most teachers do not check rigorously how well pupils have responded to their comments. While the majority of pupils correct identified spelling errors and include additional information, only a very few produce suitable responses to teachers' feedback. Overall, teachers' feedback to pupils is not contributing well enough to supporting their progress.

Recommendation 5: Review and strengthen the school's arrangements for tackling bullying

No judgement applied

Since the core inspection, the school has implemented effective strategies to prevent bullying and deal with any cases that arise. As a result, the number of bullying instances has decreased significantly. Many pupils are now confident that the school deals effectively with any case of bullying.

The school has introduced a number of valuable strategies to raise pupils' understanding of the nature and impact of bullying. These include presentations in assemblies and specific workshops on the effects of bullying.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the ways in which they can report any concerns regarding their wellbeing, for example using the school's dashboard digital tool or by visiting the wellbeing centre. Heads of year follow clear and consistent procedures that ensure that the school is able to deal effectively with any reported incidents of bullying. There are also well-understood sanctions applied for any pupils who reoffend. A member of the senior leadership team monitors closely all allegations of bullying.

Recommendation 6: Improve the quality and consistency of middle leadership to ensure that they secure sufficient improvements in standards and wellbeing within their areas of responsibility

No judgement applied

Since the time of the core inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school with the appointment of a second headteacher in as many years as well as other significant changes to the membership of the leadership team. While the school has made progress in addressing a few of the recommendations from the core inspection, leadership changes have presented challenges to the school and overall the school has not maintained a strong enough focus on addressing key recommendations, such as teaching, skills provision, leadership and standards. As a result, progress in important areas has been too slow.

Following his appointment to the school in September 2018, the new headteacher has begun to introduce a series of suitable strategies to address important areas for improvement. However, it is too soon to comment on how effectively middle and senior leaders implement and sustain the strategies or the impact of this work on standards and teaching.

Since the time of the core inspection strategies to develop middle leadership in the school have mostly been ineffective. Recently, the school has provided suitable training and introduced systems to support accountability. However, many senior leaders do not use these systems well enough or hold middle leaders to account robustly enough. Governors have also not held many middle leaders properly to account. Consequently, these measures have not resulted in sufficient or sustained improvements to the quality and impact of middle leadership.

Many middle leaders are developing a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This includes pastoral leaders, who have supported improvements in aspects of wellbeing such as a reduction in instances of bullying and improved systems to monitor attendance. However, there have not been sufficient improvements in the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of teaching. Many middle leaders have an overly positive view of teaching within their subject areas as they do not evaluate well enough the impact that teaching has on the standards pupils achieve. Although they list data and provide a little analysis of it, they do not consider trends in performance and the progress that pupils make, or offer any evaluation of how teaching may have contributed to pupil progress

Recommendation 7: Improve the rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning

No judgement applied

Since the core inspection, the school has used a variety of quality assurance and improvement planning processes. However, this has not led to sufficient or sustained improvements in important aspects of the school's work, including attendance, the quality of teaching, meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, and the standards they achieve overall.

During this academic year, the school has introduced another cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning processes that is systematic and understood by most staff. Although these arrangements have the potential to be more robust and consistent, senior leaders in particular, and middle leaders, do not apply these well enough. Consequently, they do not have the impact they might otherwise have.

The school draws upon a suitable range of evidence, including pupil performance data, to inform self-evaluation. However, there is very limited evaluation of that data, and lesson observations and work scrutiny do not focus well enough on the progress that pupils make or on the development of their skills. As a result, the self-evaluation report is too generous in judging important aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and of leadership.

Departmental evaluations follow a useful common format. Although middle leaders now use data more systematically to consider pupils' achievement, they do not evaluate pupils' performance well enough. This contributes to an overly positive view

of teaching and an inability to identify specific areas of it that need to improve. In addition, their evaluation of leadership is mostly superficial and takes little account of the impact, or otherwise, that it has had on provision and pupil outcomes.

The school and departmental development plans use a consistent approach that focuses suitably on key developmental priorities. However, development planning, particularly at departmental level, is too variable. Around half of the actions designed to bring about the improvements needed are not precise or robust enough. This is exacerbated by success criteria, most commonly for leadership, that are actions and are not linked well enough to standards. Senior leaders have helped middle leaders to refine and develop their documentation. However, the quality and usefulness of departmental improvement plans as a tool for school improvement are limited. This is because of the inconsistent and ineffective quality assurance and line management by many senior leaders. In addition, governors have not been involved sufficiently in the school's self-evaluation processes or in monitoring robustly progress against improvement plans at departmental or whole-school level.

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.