



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**

**St Aidan's V.A.P. School
Wiston
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA62 4PS**

Date of visit: June 2016

by

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

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The monitoring team

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Outcome of monitoring

St Aidan’s VAP School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in October 2014.

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

Recommendation 1: Raise the attainment of more able pupils

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has reviewed its provision for more able pupils and this is beginning to impact positively on the outcomes they achieve in many core areas of learning. For example, the recent realignment of class timetables to ensure that teachers deliver English and mathematics lessons at the same time allows them to place the most capable pupils with older age groups. These initiatives are starting to impact positively on the achievement of more able pupils.

More able pupils in the Foundation Phase read well and develop effective writing skills. In Year 2, they use an imaginative range of vocabulary and a good understanding of the forms of writing to create a recount of their meeting with the international footballer Angharad James. They use their knowledge of spelling patterns and phonetic skills well to spell complex words correctly. A few more able pupils use advanced forms of punctuation, such as colons and apostrophes, with increasing accuracy.

In key stage 2, more able pupils write well in a wide range of forms, such as when preparing a debate on whether the Houses of Parliament should be renovated, or when writing a historical play script. They spell accurately and use a good variety of punctuation to add interest and meaning to their work. Most more able pupils in both key stages make good progress in the development of their literacy skills over time.

In the Foundation Phase, more able pupils have a good understanding of number and can apply this in a range of contexts. For example, pupils in Year 2 use their knowledge of place value to purchase items from the class shop, totalling the value of their purchases and converting amounts in pence to pounds.

In key stage 2, more able pupils develop their number skills appropriately. For example, they use their knowledge of ratio and proportion to calculate the number of pots of paint required to make a specific colour. They use their understanding of a range of measures well to calculate to two decimal places the total weight of bags of sweets. However, teachers do not provide more able pupils with consistent enough challenge to attain the higher levels in science and mathematics.

In the Foundation Phase, over the last four years, the performance of more able pupils in literacy and mathematics has been generally above the average for similar schools. At key stage 2, more able pupils’ performance in English at the higher than

expected level (level 5) has placed the school mostly in the top 25% for the last four years in comparison to similar schools. However, assessments in mathematics and science have placed the school in the lower 50% for the last two years. For 2016, unverified teachers’ assessments and the work in pupils’ books indicate that the school’s new initiatives are yet to have significant impact.

Recommendation 2: Improve standards of Welsh in key stage 2

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

At the time of the inspection, pupils’ standards in Welsh were very low. Since this point, the school has significantly raised its expectations of the standards pupils can achieve in their ability to read, speak and write in Welsh. New arrangements to improve the provision for the development of pupils’ Welsh language skills have been highly effective. All pupils in key stage 2 now have regular opportunities to develop and practise their reading skills. They talk enthusiastically about their Welsh language reading books and a few choose to read Welsh texts independently on the internet during break times.

The school is now making good use of its Welsh speaking staff to improve the skills of other members of staff and pupils. Partnership working with another local primary school through, for example, the meeting of both schools’ ‘Cryw Cymraeg’ pupils has been particularly effective. Weekly assemblies, led by the ‘Cryw Cymraeg’ wholly in Welsh, have been influential in raising pupils’ enthusiasm and the status of the language in the school.

Many pupils in key stage 2 now demonstrate a good knowledge of the Welsh language. For example, pupils in Year 6 read increasingly complex fiction and nonfiction texts with accurate pronunciation and good comprehension. They correctly use their understanding of how to speak in the future tense to ask and answer questions about what they are doing at the weekend. They extend their answers well using a range of simple connectives. Most pupils in Year 4 describe how they are feeling and extend their answers to provide reasons. They discuss their preferences for different types of food, describe aspects of their home life and talk appropriately about the weather.

Across key stage 2, written tasks now build well on pupils’ previous skills and understanding. Most pupils often write at length. For example, pupils in Year 6 use their understanding of how to write in the past tense to describe what they have done recently. Pupils in Year 3, use a good range of vocabulary and a sound understanding of language patterns to create dialogues describing pupils’ likes and dislikes.

Recommendation 3: Provide more opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Phase to use literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, and for pupils throughout the school to develop greater independence

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The school’s work to embed the development of pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is effective. A strategic overview outlines clearly how teachers will plan to develop these skills in all subject areas. The school provides imaginative opportunities for pupils to use these skills in all areas of learning.

Most pupils in the Foundation Phase use their literacy skills at the same level in their topic work as they do in dedicated language lessons. For example, pupils in Year 2 write accurate descriptions of how a flowering plant attracts insects and produces seeds. They use their mathematical skills well in other subject areas, such as when calculating the total cost of items purchased when programming a simple robot to move around an imaginary high street.

In key stage 2, pupils write in a range of forms as part of their work in other subject areas. There are good opportunities for pupils to write at length. For example, pupils in Year 6 write effective discussions about whether Henry VIII was right to break away from the Catholic Church. They apply their numeracy skills well, such as when writing an explanation of why August is the best month for Rio de Janeiro to host the Olympic Games.

Teachers now plan well for the development of pupils’ independent learning skills. They provide good opportunities for pupils to make choices about what they would like to learn and explore their areas of interest within their specified topics. There are useful opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their life in school. For example, the ‘Criw Cymraeg’ requested, and organised, a dedicated Welsh reading area for pupils to develop their reading skills independently.

More able pupils develop very good independent skills. For example, in the lunchtime programming club they are encouraged to persevere on their own to tackle challenges and choices while creating their own games or composing music.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that teachers provide pupils of all abilities with an appropriate level of challenge, and improve the quality of teachers’ feedback so that pupils know how to improve

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

All staff now have a good understanding of how to match activities to the ability of pupils. As a result, in many cases, teachers plan lessons that challenge all groups of learners well. Their expectation of the level of work that pupils are capable of achieving has risen and all groups of pupils make at least appropriate progress in the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers’ planning is now consistent across the school and clearly indicates how they vary work to suit pupils’ needs. However, although the school has made significant headway in this area, planned activities do not consistently suit the differing needs of all pupil ability groups to ensure they make the best possible progress. Senior leaders are aware of this and they are working to ensure greater consistency.

The school’s new feedback and marking policy has embedded well in all classes. It provides clear guidance to staff and ensures a consistency of approach that enables nearly all pupils to be clear about what was successful in their work and what needs to be improved. In many cases, pupils are now responding well to the written comments made by teachers and these help them to make further improvements.

Most pupils assess their work and that of their peers very successfully. The use of pink pen to indicate what went well and green to show how pupils can make enhancements is consistent across the school. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of this system and use it well. The use of prompts to provide pupils with useful language patterns to help with self and peer assessment, both verbally and in writing, is effective and well embedded.

Recommendation 5: Establish a clear strategic direction that focuses on improving standards for pupils of all abilities

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school is currently piloting a federation arrangement with a neighbouring church school. The experienced headteacher of the neighbouring school is acting as the executive headteacher for St Aidan primary school.

Since her arrival in April 2016, the executive headteacher has provided clear strategic direction to St Aidan’s. She has a very good understanding of the priorities and the rapid pace needed for the school to improve pupils’ standards of achievement. To this end, she has put in place new initiatives, such as timetabling the literacy and numeracy sessions at the same time in the mornings to allow pupils across the school to work in appropriate ability groups. By focusing on clear priorities, the school has accelerated its progress in bringing about improvement in pupils’ achievements, for example in raising standards in Welsh.

Senior leaders and staff work effectively with the executive headteacher to bring about the changes needed and plan the work for the coming academic year. The good relationships and joint activities with the staff of the paired school mean that staff at St Aidan’s are benefiting regularly from professional dialogue and opportunities to observe and share practice with colleagues.

Staff and pupils have a good understanding of the vision for the school. Pupils show pride in their work as evident in the improved quality of written work, the very good progress they have made in Welsh and their willingness to engage and explain their work.

Minutes of staff meetings show that they take place regularly and that staff follow through on their allocated actions. There is now a much greater emphasis on discussing the outcomes of monitoring. However, there is no plan for the rotation of standing items, for example to provide opportunities for staff to share effective practice regularly.

Recommendation 6: Develop the role of the governing body in providing greater challenge to the school and ensuring that the school meets all statutory requirements

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The governors have continued to make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of pupils’ standards to better inform their decision-making. A few governors have observed aspects of school life and written insightful reports about

the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. This, in turn, is helping them to ask challenging questions of staff. Governors welcome the appointment of the executive headteacher as the greater degree of transparency that she has brought helps governors to understand school processes better.

Governors have made good progress in identifying the training they need to undertake. The challenge adviser provides training to the entire governing body using the school’s own data. This helps governors to ask challenging questions, to understand pupil attainment better and to deploy available resources effectively to remove barriers to learning.

The governing body, and associated sub-committees, meet regularly. The clerk to the governing body provides well-organised minutes of governors’ meetings. The minutes record actions, individuals’ responsibilities and outcomes. However, the minutes do not record clearly enough which issues have been discussed and how they have challenged senior leaders.

Due to the negotiations about the possible federation of St Aidan’s with a neighbouring church school, the governing bodies have engaged in useful professional dialogue. This is helping to support the governing body at St Aidan’s to develop further the knowledge and skills they need to support the school effectively.

The governing body ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements. As a result, every teacher has time for planning, preparation and assessment as is legally required.

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

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The school has improved its self-evaluation processes and staff now regularly monitor and measure how the school’s actions improve standards and provision for all pupils. Leaders have involved all staff, governors, pupils and parents in the process of creating the post-inspection action plan. This includes the structuring of formal opportunities for all to engage in the monitoring and evaluation processes.

The school continues to widen the range of first-hand evidence on which it bases its self-evaluation. The process includes data analysis, scrutiny of pupils’ work and monitoring of the quality of teaching.

Leaders make better use of information from lesson observations and book scrutiny to inform the self-evaluation report. They are beginning to consider a wider range of data. Overall, subject leaders have improved the quality of their subject reports, which are generally more focused and more evaluative. For example, the monitoring of language and literacy across the curriculum has focused on scrutiny of pupils’ work and listening to learners, as well as reviewing, among other things, the helpfulness and consistency of teachers’ marking and feedback. Subject leaders are now considering a wider range of evidence. The evidence includes, for example, governors’ observations about whether the school has met certain recommendations in the Foundation Phase.

As a result of this work, staff have identified and agreed ways forward. Working with staff from the neighbouring church school has allowed staff at St Aidan’s to benchmark their own findings informally against those of another school.

Leaders also seek the views of parents and pupils about aspects of the school’s work and they use this information appropriately to bring about improvements. An example of this is using feedback from pupils to create the school vision statement and to improve the provision for Welsh reading books across the school.

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.