



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: special measures**

**Brecon High School  
Penlan  
Brecon  
Powys  
LD3 9SR**

**Date of visit: May 2016**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Sue Halliwell	Reporting Inspector
Michelle Gosney	Team Inspector
Bethan Whittall	Team Inspector
Farrukh Khan	Team Inspector

## Outcome of monitoring

Brecon High School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

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

### **Induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) (providers in special measures only)**

The Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (Wales) Regulations 2015 state that an induction period may **not** be served in a school requiring special measures i.e. described in grounds 6 or 8 in section 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013(1). The presumption is that schools requiring special measures are not suitable for providing induction for newly qualified teachers, other than in exceptional circumstances. Therefore schools requiring special measures should not normally appoint a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to their staff.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan. 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: Raise standards at key stage 3 and key stage 4, particularly in science, Welsh second language and the performance of boys**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the previous monitoring visit in February, the school has continued to track pupil progress carefully, particularly that of the key stage 4 pupils as they approach their external examinations. As reported at that time, the school's analysis of this data informs leaders suitably of current standards against key performance indicators. The monitoring of pupils' progress is used well by the school to plan support and intervention for pupils who are at risk of underperforming.

The standards achieved in lessons are similar to those reported following the monitoring visit in February. Most pupils work conscientiously and have positive attitudes to learning. In many lessons pupils make suitable progress. Most listen carefully, respond suitably and are confident, articulate speakers. Many pupils read well and pick out the key ideas and information from a range of texts. The majority of pupils organise their writing appropriately and have a rich vocabulary. Over time many pupils improve the quality and accuracy of their written work well. However, a minority of pupils are careless in their presentation and the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

In a minority of lessons, pupils do not make enough progress as a result of shortcomings in teaching.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve attendance**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the core inspection, rates of attendance have continued to improve.

The school tracks attendance well. It monitors attendance by gender closely on a weekly basis. The latest data shows that improvements in attendance rates for boys and girls have been maintained since last academic year. From September 2015 until May 2016, the overall attendance rate was 95.3% which is around the same as the attendance for the same period last year when attendance was slightly above modelled outcomes. The attendance of girls during the same period is 95.26%, an improvement of 0.31 percentage points on that achieved over the same time period in 2014 to 2015. The attendance of boys during the same period is 95.34%, an improvement of 0.24 percentage points on that achieved over the same time in 2014 to 2015. The number of persistent absentees has significantly reduced in this academic year compared to the number for the same period last academic year.

Since the last monitoring visit in February 2016, the school has maintained its strong focus on improving attendance. Strategies include ensuring that attendance is a high profile issue for pupils. To support this, the school gives suitable priority to the reward and incentive scheme for those pupils who have consistently high attendance and those who have made the most progress.

### **Recommendation 3: Increase the challenge of teaching to match that in the best lessons**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the monitoring visit in February the school has continued to focus on improving the standard of teaching. Quality assurance procedures and professional development activities are supporting this improvement and the development of a reflective culture where ideas are shared helpfully between staff.

Nearly all teachers have positive working relationships with their pupils and support them well during lessons. Most teachers tailor support suitably to meet the needs of individual pupils

In many lessons, teachers plan well for progression in learning. Many teachers encourage pupils to work independently and provide useful feedback to pupils during the lesson. They question effectively and challenge pupils to improve their learning. The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not enable pupils to make appropriate progress. The teachers plan a range of activities but do not consider well enough how these activities link together so that pupils make enough progress. A few teachers do not

take sufficient account of the learning needs of individual pupils in planning activities. The pace in a few of these lessons is too fast and the teachers do not make sure that at each stage all pupils are ready to move on. In a few lessons the pace is too slow and pupils become distracted and off task.

The school has a sound understanding of the remaining shortcomings and in a round of lesson observations carried out following the visit in February has identified specific areas for development for individual teachers.

#### **Recommendation 4: Improve the quality and consistency of marking and feedback given to pupils**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has maintained its focus on the 'Feedback, Action, Response' (FAR) marking strategy. However, while the school has established consistency in the regularity and approach to marking, it has not achieved the same consistency in the quality of teacher 'action' comments and pupil 'response'. Therefore, the strategy has not had sufficient impact on improving the standard of work produced and the progress made by pupils.

Pupils receive useful written feedback from nearly all teachers. However, the quality of action comments is more variable. A majority of teachers write action comments that require pupils to complete a task to extend their understanding or to improve their work. However, the quality of pupil response is too variable. This is either because the pupil has not responded adequately or because teachers have not provided pupils with an appropriate opportunity to respond or ensure that they know how to respond. In a few subjects, for example in Art, pupils are given appropriate and valuable time and guidance on how to implement the action and as a result they improve their work.

Since the last visit, all staff have received useful training in developing peer and self-assessment. The impact of this training can be seen in more opportunities for these types of activities in a majority of subjects. However, the quality and impact of these activities on improving pupils' work is too variable.

Senior leaders and middle managers continue to monitor the marking of pupils' books appropriately. The information gathered is used suitably to support staff in improving the quality of feedback to pupils.

#### **Recommendation 5: Increase senior and middle managers' accountability for improving standards and quality, through rigorous line management arrangements**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the time of the last monitoring visit in February, the school has improved further its arrangements for holding senior and middle leaders to account.

The senior leadership team has strengthened its procedures for holding each other to account. This includes undertaking joint scrutiny of minutes of line management meetings to ensure uniformity and that action points are clear and followed up. For example, they identified that data needed to be presented in a more consistent format to heads of department.

Line management and departmental meetings have also improved in consistency. A common agenda ensures that meetings focus appropriately on standards, teaching and leadership. The rigour of line management processes have improved. The frequency of meetings is tailored to the requirements of individual departments. Data is scrutinised more carefully and action points and timelines are included and followed up suitably at subsequent meetings. However, whilst it is too early to see the impact of these improvements on overall pupil outcomes, there have been clear improvements in quality assurance procedures and the development of a reflective culture among staff.

**Recommendation 6: Improve the sharpness and clarity of improvement planning at all levels, using specific and measurable targets**

Satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendation

Since the last monitoring visit the school has continued to make satisfactory progress in reviewing the school and departmental improvement plans.

The school improvement plan has updated targets, actions and success criteria following a recent useful data collection and review activity. The school is honest about any actions that have not been completed and includes valid additional actions where appropriate. Targets and action points, and success criteria, are suitable and respond to the priorities found in the school's self-evaluation. There is a clear link between professional development activities and findings from self-evaluation assurance processes. These are tailored well to school priorities.

The school has developed a useful range of self-evaluation tools to identify what needs to improve. These include pupils' voice, lesson observation, work scrutiny and learning walks.

Since the last monitoring visit nearly all departments have revisited their improvement plans to update their progress against targets and revisit planned actions. The standard of the plans remains too variable in quality. In the best examples, departments have used a wide range of data sources to analyse pupil progress well and inform planning. They comment robustly and honestly on progress and include sharp success criteria. However, a minority of plans contain action points that are not sharp enough, have success criteria that lack clarity and do not use data well to inform planning.

**Recommendation 7: Plan to resolve the budget deficit effectively**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

We reported after the monitoring visit of July 2013 that the school has made very good progress with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 8: Meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

We reported after the monitoring visit of July 2013 that the school has made very good progress with this recommendation.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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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.