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 Review

Burlais Primary School
Gerddi Alexander
Cwmbwrla
Swansea
SA5 8BN

Date of visit: December 2018

by

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

Outcome of visit

Burlais Primary 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 any further follow-up activity.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Raise standards of pupils' writing

Teachers have established a consistent approach to developing pupils writing skills across the school. Each theme has a strong focus on teaching a range of different text types and genres. As a result, most teachers plan beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum through purposeful learning activities.

In the foundation phase, pupils develop sound early writing skills through a range of useful activities and experiences. In Year 2, many pupils apply their writing skills well to write for different audiences and purposes, for example when writing a recount of their visit to the fire station and when writing about the history of The Great Fire of London. They use writing skeletons appropriately to structure their work and to organise their writing. Many show a good understanding of basic punctuation and spelling patterns and make good progress over time. More able pupils are beginning to use interesting vocabulary and literary techniques in their work, such as alliteration, as well as using more sophisticated punctuation.

In key stage 2, many pupils make good progress over time. They have a clear understanding of the different forms of writing and use the redrafting process effectively to improve their work further. Many show marked improvements between their first and second drafts, such as adapting vocabulary choices to engage the reader's interest. Many apply their understanding of the features of a range of text types well, including recounts, instructions, discussion, reports and explanation texts, to their own writing. For example, when writing instructions for making a Christmas card and when recording a science experiment to test how to keep apples fresh for longer. Many pupils' spelling is generally accurate and they make sensible attempts at words that are more complex. More able pupils write at length to a good standard and show a good understanding of language, for example when writing a report on penguins they use technical and subject specific vocabulary well. Pupils' handwriting is generally improving although a minority of pupils do not always present their work neatly.

R2. Improve pupils' ability to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum

Teachers have revised their planning to provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Subject leaders now monitor the coverage of skills regularly to ensure that teachers plan more effectively for the development of the full range of skills. As a result, long term plans for literacy, numeracy and ICT now focus suitably on developing a range of skills through interesting themes.

Most teachers provide good opportunities to reinforce the literacy skills that pupils learn in language lessons. As a result, many pupils apply their literacy skills appropriately in a suitable range of contexts, for example pupils in Year 2 express their opinion on the work of the artist Jackson Pollock and write detailed instructions about how to make slime. In key stage 2, many pupils develop sound literacy skills by applying them regularly in their learning. This includes reading for information, discussing their ideas in groups as well as recording them in a range of forms.

Many teachers are beginning to provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects and areas of learning. For example when counting the number of spoonfuls of different coloured oats to make 'reindeer food' in the reception class or producing graphs of how much fruit is grown in different countries in Year 4. In upper key stage 2, pupils use their skills well to interpret data and summarise their findings effectively. However, the frequency and quality of numeracy tasks provided by teachers continues to vary across the school.

Since the core inspection, leaders have planned useful opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills progressively. Most pupils now use word processing skills and presentation tools well to present their work in a range of contexts. For example, Year 5 produce effective digital presentations to persuade the headteacher to fund their enterprise project plan. Many older pupils use data, graphing packages and databases appropriately to record information, for example to analyse data when planning a flight to the Antarctic. However, this is at an early stage of development and opportunities to develop pupils' skills progressively in these areas is not consistent across the school.

Many teachers are beginning to plan 'rich tasks' and purposeful topics that enable pupils to combine their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively in their learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 use these skills effectively to develop their understanding of the polar regions and climate change as part of their work on the 'frozen planet'.

R3. Improve pupils' attendance

The school has increased its focus on improving pupils' attendance. Leaders have used the pupil development grant to fund the appointment of an attendance officer and a family liaison officer. They have worked successfully to improve families' understanding of the importance of regular attendance at school. There are effective systems to track and challenge absence. A system of contacting parents immediately if a pupil is absent without reason has led to fewer occasional days of absence.

Leaders have developed a strong, strategic partnership with the education welfare officer and this had led to effective targeted support for identified families. The attendance and family liaison officers work effectively in close partnership with the education welfare officer to support pupils who are absent persistently. As a result, rates of persistent absence have reduced considerably.

The school has appointed three pupils as attendance ambassadors to help the senior leadership team manage attendance incentives, such as awards and competitions. As a result, pupil motivation to improve attendance has increased. Governors have a good understanding of pupils' attendance and the link governor works effectively to support and challenge the headteacher in relation to attendance issues. Pupils' attendance has shown an improving trend over the past six years and in recent years has placed the school in the upper 50% when compared with similar schools.

R4. Improve the quality of teaching and teachers' use of assessment to meet the needs of all pupils

Leaders and staff have focused well on improving teaching across the school. Teachers now have high expectations for all pupils' achievements and plan tasks appropriately to match the needs of pupils of different abilities. For example, they set more able pupils in Year 6 stimulating science tasks that challenge them appropriately and develop their thinking and problem solving skills. In addition, staff have improved their knowledge and understanding of how to plan suitably to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through purposeful activities. This has had a positive effect on pupils' standards across the school.

Most teachers support and challenge pupils well during learning activities, for example by using 'writing mats' to help pupils plan their work appropriately. This helps develop their independent learning skills effectively. However, in a few classes, the overuse of worksheets inhibits pupils' ability to write at length.

Most teachers give relevant oral feedback to pupils about their achievements. Generally, written comments provide pupils with useful information about how well

they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. In the best examples, teachers provide further challenge in their feedback to encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and to think for themselves about where improvements are required. Overall, teachers provide pupils with useful opportunities to assess their own work and that of other pupils. This is having a positive effect on pupils' understanding of how to improve their own work appropriately.

R5. Focus senior leadership roles and performance management procedures on improving teaching and learning

Senior leaders now have a better understanding of their role in improving standards across the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a stronger strategic overview of the standards that pupils' achieve. They gain useful first-hand evidence to inform their judgements, for example through conducting learning walks, observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. Feedback to teachers is specific and purposeful and indicates clear points for improvement. Where senior leaders identify areas where teachers need greater support, they organise suitable training and monitor the outcomes of this effectively. To date, many of the activities to support teaching and learning have focused around the recommendations from the core inspection. There are now opportunities for a more comprehensive review of the quality of teaching across the school.

The school has appropriate performance management systems to drive school improvement. Most performance objectives focus on the priorities in the post inspection action plan that relate to improving teaching and learning and raising standards. There are suitable professional development activities planned to help teachers achieve these objectives.

R6. Ensure that the processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning focus robustly on raising pupils' standards

Leaders have reviewed the school's processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning since the core inspection. They have established an effective cycle of monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring activities now focus more effectively on the standards that pupils achieve. For example, the senior management team regularly assess pupils' progress in improving their writing skills and share this information with teaching staff to identify where they need to make further improvements. Senior leaders ensure that all teachers have valuable opportunities to be involved in monitoring activities. This supports their professional development well. The role of pupils in this process is an area that the school has rightly identified as an area to improve.

Planning for improvement is effective and leaders focus their attention well on raising standards. They make good use of staff expertise to upskill their colleagues and improve outcomes. For example, a member of staff supports others to develop their own and pupils' ICT skills effectively. This has made staff more confident in encouraging pupils to use their ICT skills across the curriculum at an appropriate level.

Governors provide the school with strong support in relation to self-evaluation and school improvement. Their role in monitoring progress first-hand through activities such as learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work has improved since the core inspection. They are beginning to develop an increased understanding of pupils' standards and, as a result, provide a greater level of challenge to senior leaders.