

## **RE-INSPECTION**

**OF**

**Cardigan County Secondary School  
Park Place, Cardigan  
Ceredigion  
SA43 1AD**

**School number: 667 4044**

**Date of re-inspection: December 2009**

Cardigan County Secondary School was inspected in September 2008 and judged as requiring significant improvement. As part of the Welsh Assembly Government's requirements for schools requiring significant improvement, Estyn undertook a follow-up inspection in December 2009 focusing on the key issues identified in the Section 28 inspection.

### **Outcome of the re-inspection**

Cardigan County Secondary School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection in September 2008. As a result of this progress 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**

The school is making good progress in all the recommendations of the Section 28 report, though there is still room for further improvement. Progress against each recommendation is described below.

### **Recommendation 1: Raise standards of achievement and implement and monitor a strategy to deliver key skills throughout the school.**

#### *Attainment*

Performance in the core subject indicator (CSI) at key stage 3 in 2009 places the school in the top quarter of similar schools, compared to the bottom quarter in the two previous years. Results in mathematics in 2009 placed the school in the top quarter of similar schools, but performance was below the median in other core subjects. Other than in mathematics, the value added at key stage 3 places the school below the median against all indicators. The performance of girls does not compare favourably with national and family figures in English and especially in science.

There was an improvement in key stage 4 results in 2009 with 45% of pupils attained the Level 2 threshold, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics. This is an increase of six percentage points on the previous year and places the school in the top half when compared with similar schools. On most indicators, the school compares favourably with the family of similar schools. Results in key stage 4 show good progress when compared with pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2. However, English continues to under-perform.

#### *Standards in lessons*

A total of 32 lessons were observed during the visit. The grades are shown in the table below:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Number of lessons</b>	2	19	11	0	0
<b>Percentage</b>	6%	59%	34%	0%	0%

The proportion of grades 1 and 2 is around 10 percentage points lower than the national average for secondary schools in Wales.

In most lessons, pupils:

- have a good understanding of lesson objectives;
- behave well, and display positive attitudes and a good level of commitment;
- listen well and work productively for the duration of the lesson; and

- work well in pairs and small groups.

Where there are shortcomings, pupils:

- are not actively engaged in their learning;
- do not develop their thinking and share ideas during class discussion; and
- do not make enough progress against the lesson objectives.

#### *Quality of teaching*

There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching, which is starting to impact positively on pupils' achievements. The grades are shown in the table below:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Number of lessons</b>	5	18	9	0	0
<b>Percentage</b>	16%	56%	28%	0%	0%

The proportion of grades 1 and 2 is 72%, which is still below the national average for secondary schools in Wales (75%). However, it represents a considerable improvement since the section 28 inspection, when the proportion of teaching that was grade 2 or above was just over 50%.

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of lesson planning and teaching. In many lessons:

- plans are well-structured and detailed, and identify learning objectives and key skills;
- there is a good pace;
- pupils have opportunities to consolidate and apply their learning in small groups and pairs; and
- extensive questioning of pupils ensures their active involvement in learning.

Shortcomings in lessons that were graded 3 include:

- pupils not challenged to think and extend on their responses to questions;
- not enough structure to lessons and pupils not sufficiently actively engaged, resulting in low-level disruption; and
- teaching approaches that do not meet the needs of lower ability pupils.

## *Key skills*

The school has provided training for staff on developing key skills in lessons. This included guidance on applying the Skills Framework and on the implementation and accreditation of key skills qualifications. The whole-school key skills policy has been revised and work is now underway to incorporate key skills into subject schemes of work.

As a result of these initiatives, pupils' key skills are improving. In many lessons, pupils contribute regularly to class discussion and participate well when working in pairs or small groups. In a few instances, pupils are not challenged enough to expand on their responses, and this affects the progress they make. Pupils are able to cope with reading demands, as required, in lessons across the curriculum. Pupils write in their own words for different purposes in a majority of subjects, but there is too much variation in their ability to write at length. Pupils generally have a competent grasp of information and communications technology (ICT) skills and numeracy skills to enable them to complete tasks in other subjects. However, in some instances, weak numeracy skills hinder progress, for example in science. Overall, there are not enough opportunities to use and improve ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum.

The number of students gaining key skills qualifications in the sixth form has increased over the past three years. In 2009, a majority of students gained a qualification in one or more key skills at level 2 or level 3.

There has not been a whole-school audit of planning, provision and standards in key skills.

### **Recommendation 2: Employ effective strategies to improve the behaviour and attitude of pupils at Key Stage 3.**

Pupils are generally well behaved, polite and supportive of each other in their lessons and as they move around the school. New procedures for managing behaviour have had a positive effect on the life of the school and there is less low-level disruption in lessons. Staff roles and responsibilities for behaviour are now clear. The school has developed effective tracking and monitoring systems to help in the early identification of behaviour issues. However, fixed term exclusions are too high.

### **Recommendation 3: Review annually all staff job descriptions to ensure that staff have agreed responsibilities for which they are accountable.**

This recommendation has been fully addressed. The school now undertakes annual reviews of all staff job descriptions. All current job descriptions have been signed by the relevant member of staff to confirm the agreed responsibilities.

**Recommendation 4: Improve the effectiveness of senior and middle managers by:**

- refining the roles of the SMT;
- formalising and standardising the monitoring processes of the senior and middle management teams to raise standards and address the shortcomings in the quality of teaching;
- creating and developing a middle management structure to contribute to the strategic direction of the school, strengthening the monitoring and accountability roles of managers within the school; and
- improving communication between and amongst management teams and monitoring the effectiveness to ensure consistency of delivery and impact.

The roles of the senior managers have been made clear and specific, and there is now a more effective understanding of whole-school issues. The restructuring of the management system has contributed significantly towards addressing the shortcomings identified in the Section 28 inspection report.

Faculty and subject leaders are clear about their respective roles and are now working more effectively to ensure that standards of teaching are constantly being raised. This process involves the use of a standard lesson planning format, regular monitoring of lessons by the faculty leaders, and opportunities for other staff to observe the lessons of other teachers.

The new management structure enables faculty leaders and middle managers to contribute to the strategic direction of the school. There are clear lines of communication to ensure that all staff are aware of developments in the school.

**Recommendation 5: Improve the quality of whole-school and departmental development planning and strengthen the process to ensure coherence and consistency between the planning and monitoring process.**

The school has made good progress on this recommendation. It has established a systematic process for linking monitoring activities to development planning. There is now a greater consistency and rigour in development planning.

Faculty self-evaluation reports are detailed and presented in a common format. They include a robust analysis of performance in each subject, using extensive data comparisons. They identify clearly the issues that need to be addressed and these in turn act as the basis of the faculty development plans.

Faculty development plans focus on raising standards and improving aspects of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment for learning and pupil target setting. The plans provide a clear direction for the work of the faculties. Many plans have detailed objectives, but the intended outcomes in a few are not specific enough.

There is an outline for a new three-year school development plan which will draw on the faculty plans. At present, it identifies accurately the key matters that the school needs to address, but it needs further detail to make it an effective working document.

**Recommendation 6: Promote the development of bilingual skills across the curriculum.**

There have been useful initial developments to improve provision and pupils' Welsh-language skills. A revised language policy has been produced. A working group has been established to develop bilingual opportunities across the school. There is increased use of Welsh in classrooms and around the school by teachers. However, there has been no significant progress in the use of Welsh by pupils in the English stream.

The school is making good use of transition funding to increase the number of pupils who join Welsh-medium or bilingual classes at transition from key stage 2. The proportion of Year 7 pupils in the Welsh-medium stream this year has risen to over 55%.

Bilingual units of work in history, geography and religious education have been prepared for pupils in the bilingual stream in key stage 3 this year. This is a significant initiative that has the potential to make a considerable impact on pupils' Welsh language development.

Bilingual teaching has been introduced for the first time in Year 12 geography classes. However, in general, opportunities are limited in terms of continuity and progression in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school's post-inspection action plan has identified an objective to extend bilingual provision to other subjects at key stage 3 from September 2009, and to ensure continuity in the availability of Welsh-medium provision at key stage 4. To date, there has been very little progress in this respect.

Faculty self-evaluation reports generally give appropriate attention to identifying areas for development in the provision for bilingualism. However, development planning does not include a detailed strategy to take forward proposals.

**Recommendation 7: Develop and standardise assessment and target-setting structures and improve the quality of advice given to pupils and students across the school to ensure that they are fully aware of what is required to improve their own performance.**

The school has made good progress on this recommendation. It has revised its assessment policy and there is a suitable strategy to implement it. There are well-defined and understood expectations about assessment. The policy provides a solid foundation for the establishment of a rigorous and effective assessment and target setting process. Some aspects of the policy are still in the process of becoming embedded in the normal working practices across the school.

The school has improved its use of performance information. The school's tracking system provides useful information for faculties and pastoral teams. It helps to identify underachievement and acts as the basis for setting target levels and grades for pupils.

The school has worked effectively to improve the quality of advice given to pupils through the adoption of assessment for learning principles. Most teachers provide useful written comments and the majority of these include helpful targets for pupils to achieve. However, a minority of these targets are not specific enough about how to improve standards in aspects of the subject.

In most subjects, pupils assess their own work and identify targets for improvement. Although, there are many good examples of this practice, it is not well developed in a few subjects.

**Recommendation 8: Enhance the monitoring role of governors and ensure that all regulations regarding the school prospectus and statutory requirements are met including the Disability Equality Scheme and its three-year action plan.**

The school has made good progress in addressing this recommendation. Since the Section 28 inspection, there has been a review of the governing body. The school has established four new sub-committees that meet regularly, providing the necessary support, challenge and strategic management to the school. Governors are now much clearer about the school's priorities for development. Each faculty has a link governor who attends and contributes to faculty meetings. This ensures clear lines of communication between the governors and staff. The school has not appointed associate pupil governors.

The school now has a disability equality policy and related action plan, and it is monitoring its implementation.

The school is in the process of re-drafting the prospectus in order to meet statutory requirements.

**Recommendation 9: Ensure that all members of staff are CRB checked.**

The school has addressed this recommendation. All members of staff have been CRB checked. Effective systems are now in place in relation to new appointments.

**Recommendation 10: Instigate effective procedures to monitor the use of school resources to ensure value for money.**

The recruitment of an experienced management accountant as business manager has ensured quick progress against this recommendation. The business manager has introduced systems to formalise the management of the school budget. Monitoring of the use of school resources is now

systematic and this process has already identified inefficient practice and achieved some savings.

There has been revision of departmental capitation budgets and the monitoring procedures. This has led to a logical and fair distribution of resources against agreed criteria. This has already resulted in better use of those resources.

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve further, in addition to continuing with current actions, the school should:

- improve standards in English;
- audit key skills, with a focus on ensuring consistency and progression in pupils' experiences and progress across the curriculum;
- make sure that the whole-school and departmental development plans identify clear and specific actions and intended outcomes;
- devise a detailed strategy that identifies specific and measurable targets to increase Welsh-medium provision;
- develop further the use of subject-specific targets on pupils' work; and
- appoint associate pupil governors