

RE-INSPECTION
OF
DUFFRYN HIGH SCHOOL
LIGHTHOUSE ROAD, DUFFRYN, NEWPORT NP10 8YD

SCHOOL NUMBER: 680 4020

DATE OF INSPECTION: 19-21 MAY 2009

Duffryn High School was inspected in February 2008 under Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 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 May 2009 focusing on the key issues identified in the Section 28 inspection.

Outcome of the re-inspection

Duffryn High School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection in February 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 has made good progress with all the recommendations of the Section 28 report, though there is still room for further improvement. Senior managers have established extensive and robust monitoring procedures that are raising expectations and having a clear impact on the school's work and the standards pupils achieve. Progress with each recommendation is described below.

Recommendation 1: satisfy statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all students.

The school has addressed this recommendation. There are suitable arrangements for a daily act of collective worship. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a good range of resources and activities to support the act of worship in tutor groups. These materials and activities encourage pupils to consider, discuss and reflect on a range of relevant topics, which are linked to the school's weekly theme and 'thought for the day', and also help develop pupils' communication and thinking skills.

Senior managers carry out informal and formal reviews of the quality of collective worship. These reviews have helped to promote the most effective approaches. In the best cases, school assemblies and tutor periods provide rewarding and thought-provoking experiences. In a few classes, teachers do not develop themes in a sufficiently imaginative manner.

Recommendation 2: continue to raise standards in all subjects, attempting to eradicate shortcomings that have been identified.

The school has implemented a good range of appropriate strategies that are helping to improve standards and examination results in key stages 3 and 4. New staffing arrangements and initiatives are having a positive impact and contributing to improvements in standards in mathematics and science.

Examination and assessment results for 2008 show improvements in many performance indicators although there is scope for further improvement.

In National Curriculum assessments at key stage 3, the percentages of pupils achieving level 5 and above in mathematics and science have improved steadily between 2006 and 2008. When compared to similar schools, results in these subjects in 2008 place the school in the top quarter. The percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) has increased from 37% in 2006 to 45% in 2008, which places the school above the median when compared to similar schools. Although results in English have improved significantly since 2006, they are still below the median.

In key stage 4 in 2008, there was very good improvement in the percentages of pupils achieving grades A*-C in science, 5 A*-C grades and the core subject indicator. When compared with similar schools, the school is in the second quarter for the percentages of pupils achieving 5 A*-C and 5 A*-G grades. However, the school is below the median for the percentages of pupils achieving grades A*-C in English, maths and science and in the core subject indicator.

The inspection team observed 31 lessons in key stages 3 and 4. No lessons were observed in the sixth form or in Year 11 due to examination commitments. The standards achieved in these lessons were as follows:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of lessons	2	19	10	0	0
% of lessons	6%	61%	32%	0%	0%

The proportion of lessons at grade 2 or better is well above the 54% of lessons in key stages 3 and 4 at these grades in the Section 28 inspection. No lessons were judged to be grade 4 compared to 10% in the Section 28 inspection. Although the number of lessons observed was much lower than in the Section 28 inspection, the observations covered a wider range of subjects and provide evidence that standards are improving.

In those lessons graded 2 or better, the most common good features are that pupils:

- have a clear and detailed recall of previous learning;
- apply previous learning well to make reasoned judgements, understand new concepts and solve problems;
- are attentive, apply themselves well to learning activities and work effectively in pairs or small groups;
- make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills; and
- have a good understanding of their progress and are clear about what to do to improve.

In a minority of lessons, where there are shortcomings in learning, this is most commonly because pupils:

- do not have a firm enough understanding or recall of aspects of the work;
- do not develop their responses fully;
- do not contribute actively in class or group discussion; and
- lack the confidence to work independently and rely too much on teacher support.

In a minority of classes, a few pupils do not concentrate, apply themselves consistently to tasks, or make enough progress, because teaching does not challenge them enough.

Recommendation 3: continue to raise standards of teaching and learning, with particular reference to raising teachers’ expectations of what students can achieve, providing suitably challenging tasks and conducting lessons at an appropriate pace.

The school is making good progress in improving the quality of teaching. In the 31 lessons observed, the inspection team judged the quality of teaching as follows:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of lessons	2	19	10	0	0
% of lessons	10%	64%	26%	0%	0%

The grade profile is better than that in the Section 28 report, where only 60% of lessons were awarded grade 2 or above, but the sample of lessons was much smaller.

The school’s policies set out clear guidelines on teaching and learning. The senior management team has introduced a rigorous programme of lesson monitoring and, where appropriate, provided support to ensure that all teachers have the skills and strategies necessary to deliver effective lessons. This programme, supported by relevant in-service training, is having a positive impact on practice. However, there are still some inconsistencies across departments. For example, in a small number of lessons observed, the tasks set for pupils are not challenging enough to meet the needs of all pupils, and written feedback in some pupils’ books is not supportive or constructive enough.

The most common good features of teaching observed in lessons were:

- the positive relationships between teachers and pupils;
- learning objectives that were clearly set out at the start of the lessons and reviewed during lesson conclusions;
- high expectations of pupils and well-structured lessons;
- starter activities that quickly engaged pupils’ interest;
- the use of open-ended questioning to draw out pupil responses;
- the use of key terms to develop pupils’ technical vocabulary;
- the reinforcement and exemplification of key skills during lesson conclusions;
- effective practical demonstrations of relevant tasks; and
- frequent use of incidental Welsh.

Teachers' use of formative assessment to ensure that pupils understand how they can make progress is consistent across most departments. During lessons, many teachers challenge pupils and ask open questions to establish the extent of their learning. Pupils are also becoming more knowledgeable about level descriptors at key stage 3 and grade criteria for GCSE examinations. The practice of exemplifying standards through displaying pupils' work on classroom walls is helping pupils to understand where they are in relation to national attainment grades.

Recommendation 4: continue to seek ways of reducing students' high level of absenteeism and motivating them to learn effectively when in school.

Since the Section 28 inspection, the school has introduced new strategies to improve pupils' attendance. For example, letters written to parents set out clearly the school's expectations and point out the relationship between good attendance and improved attainment. These strategies have contributed to an improvement in attendance of about one percentage point this year compared with last year.

Members of the school leadership team have clear responsibilities for monitoring attendance. Managers receive significant support from the local authority education welfare officer (EWO), the school attendance officer and two inclusion officers. All members of staff appreciate they have an important part to play in improving pupils' attendance.

The school has a good range of well-designed strategies to promote good attendance. These include:

- an electronic lesson registration system that monitors individual attendance patterns and whole-school trends;
- displays around the school that promote attendance;
- phone calls to parents of pupils whose absence has not been explained;
- half-termly reports to parents of pupils with less than 80% attendance and more than 95% attendance;
- warning letters from the EWO to parents of all pupils with less than 80% attendance;
- individual target setting and a rewards system for pupils and classes with good attendance;
- class attendance league tables; and
- the use of the learning support base to reintegrate long-term absentees through personalised work programmes.

A very good feature is the work of the Governing Body Attendance Panel. This group meets every term and invites parents of pupils with low attendance to a meeting to identify issues and seek a way forward. There are also examples of school inclusion

officers working effectively with individual pupils to improve their attendance. The local authority monitors the school's attendance data on a monthly basis.

The school has adapted its curriculum to encourage particular groups of pupils to attend school more regularly. These changes have provided pupils with the opportunity to study a wider range of vocational courses. All key stage 4 pupils study a vocational course, and disaffected students have a more suitable curriculum that can include appropriate work experience.

Recommendation 5: continue to seek ways of improving students' behaviour, especially in classes where disruptive behaviour adversely affects overall standards of achievement.

The school's procedures to improve pupils' behaviour are very good. As a result, there have been measurable reductions in calls to the behaviour support team, in the number of pupils removed from lessons, and in the number of fixed-term exclusions.

The school takes the issue of improving and maintaining good behaviour very seriously, and employs a very wide range of effective structures and systems. The learning support manager has high status as an assistant headteacher. She leads a large team, who look after a variety of facilities that include a learning support base, an alternative compulsory education base, a unit to support pupils on the autistic spectrum, and bases for the different behaviour officers. The staff involved work hard and effectively to support pupils and their teachers.

Among the other good features are:

- the partnership with 'Positive Futures' to provide enjoyable and worthwhile activities for young people at risk of exclusion;
- an electronic tracking and assessment system (SERCO) that keeps a record not only of behavioural problems but also of the large number of commendations for good behaviour and effort;
- the availability of two inclusion officers who help to arrange or supervise alternative curriculum provision;
- an improved and well-designed report card system; and
- regular communication with parents.

The school continually refines its systems and, through its training programme, updates staff on how to use these systems correctly. It recognises that some problems arise from inappropriate teaching strategies and has a good programme of support and training for individual teachers.

During the inspection, behaviour in classes and around the school was good. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. In a very small number of the lessons observed, teachers did not deal appropriately with a minority of pupils who at times did not focus on tasks, though there was no major disruption.

Recommendation 6: improve students' key skills through their coordinated development and use across the curriculum.

The school has made good progress in improving pupils' key skills. The key skills co-ordinator and senior leaders provide clear strategic direction. At key stage 3, the main focus has been on developing literacy skills through a timetabled reading lesson for all pupils and by encouraging pupils to read during registration periods. Male staff actively promote reading for pleasure in discussions to encourage boys to read more. All staff have received recent training on strategies to improve boys' literacy and to develop pupils' communication and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Although these strategies are at an early stage of development, they are beginning to have a positive impact.

Pupils' numeracy has been enhanced through the introduction of numeracy boxes in Years 7 and 8 form rooms. Pupils engage well with the tasks provided, and show increased enjoyment in solving the number games. Local authority mathematics advisers have given helpful training to tutors to ensure greater consistency of approach in practising the numeracy skills.

The school helps pupils across the whole ability range by providing support for developing key skills. Literacy and numeracy acceleration classes offer effective programmes and are well established. A wide range of appropriate key skills qualifications is offered to pupils of all abilities from Year 9 to the sixth form.

In addition, the school has completed an audit of key skills and updated all schemes of work to include communication, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills. Lesson plans refer to opportunities to develop key skills and, in a majority of lessons, pupils apply these skills confidently. In addition, displays in many classrooms provide a welcoming environment for learning through the presentation of subject-specific terminology and advice to pupils on structuring their work and responses. Pupils used the words and prompts on the walls effectively in a majority of the lessons observed.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should continue to:

- raise standards in all subjects, particularly the core subjects;
- ensure consistency in the application of the school's teaching and assessment policies, and in teachers' use of strategies to eliminate occasional low-level disruption and inattentiveness;
- increase the level of challenge in lessons to meet the needs of all pupils;
- improve attendance; and
- provide opportunities for pupils to develop their key skills and improve the accuracy of their written expression.