

RE-INSPECTION
OF
YSGOL CLYWEDOG
RUTHIN ROAD, WREXHAM, LL13 7UB
SCHOOL NUMBER: 6654049
DATE OF INSPECTION: MAY 2008

Ysgol Clywedog was inspected in March 2007 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 2008 focusing on the key issues identified in the section 28 inspection.

OUTCOME OF THE RE-INSPECTION

Ysgol Clywedog is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations for improvement identified in the Section 28 inspection in March 2007. 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 progress in all the recommendations of the Section 28 report, though there is still room for improvement. Progress in each recommendation is described below.

Recommendation 1: raise standards of achievement and pupils' standards in key skills across the school

The school has implemented a number of appropriate strategies to improve standards of performance and examination results in key stages 3 and 4. There are indications that standards in lessons are improving, though this has yet to be confirmed by all KS3 and KS4 assessment results.

In key stage 3, the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science has improved between 2005 and 2007. When compared to similar schools, the results have moved from the fourth quarter to the second quarter in mathematics and science and the third quarter in English. The percentage attaining the core subject indicator (CSI) has also increased from 47% in 2005 to 55% in 2007. This compares well to similar schools.

In key stage 4, while there has been an upward trend between 2005 and 2007 in all key stage 4 indicators, the results when compared to similar schools continue to place the school in the third or fourth quarter for many indicators. The 5 A*- C percentage for 2007 is below the local authority and national average and below the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) estimate for the school. The core subject indicator has remained in the fourth quarter since 2005. In 2007 the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-G was 88%. This was above the national average and in the second quarter for similar schools.

The inspection team observed 23 lessons. The standards achieved in these lessons are shown in the table below:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of lessons	0	9	11	3	0
%	0%	39%	48%	13%	0%

The standards of achievement were at grade 3 or better in 87% of the lessons observed. While this is slightly below the 90% of lessons that were at grade 3 or better in the inspection in March 2007, the sample included a high proportion of lessons in the departments awarded grade 4 during the 2007 inspection. There are clear indications that standards have improved and are likely to improve further in music and modern foreign languages. However, there has not been enough progress in Welsh.

In most lessons, pupils:

- recall and use previous knowledge well;

- have a positive attitude to learning and are very well behaved;
- work well independently and in some lessons work well in groups;
- have a good understanding of their progress and what they need to do in order to improve; and
- present their work well.

In a minority of lessons, pupils:

- make insufficient progress in learning;
- are over-reliant on teacher support;
- are unable to recall work from previous lessons; and
- work at a slow pace.

The school has made good progress in the development of a whole school strategy for key skills. All Year 11 pupils have submitted portfolios of evidence for key skills level 1 qualifications in problem solving and working with others. All staff have received training and most departments have completed an audit of the opportunities to develop all six key skills.

When given the opportunity, many pupils read aloud in class, with confidence. In the majority of classes pupils write well for a wide variety of purposes. However, a minority of pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in their own words. Open and challenging questions in some lessons encourage the pupils to give extended answers. Listening skills are very good in most lessons.

Numeracy skills need further development. Some pupils are weak at mental calculation and problem-solving strategies.

The majority of pupils are developing strategies to improve their own learning and performance. Most pupils work well independently and in groups.

R2: improve the quality of teaching and assessment

The school's policies set out appropriate principles and helpful guidelines on teaching and learning, marking, assessment and monitoring. These, together with in-service training, have positively influenced practice, and there are clear signs that the quality of teaching and assessment is improving. The grade profile, from a small sample of 23 lessons, is only slightly better than that in the Section 28 report, but during the current visit inspectors focused much of their attention on subjects in which there had been several shortcomings. Important shortcomings highlighted in that report have largely been eradicated, but a few remain.

Most of the good features of teaching highlighted in the Section 28 report were again evident in a majority of the lessons observed. These included enthusiastic communication of subject knowledge, variety of learning activities, pace, and effective praise, marking and assessment. Other good features identified during the current visit were:

- a positive classroom atmosphere, with good relationships between teachers and pupils;
- the use of lively starter activities;
- well-structured lessons, with a range of teaching strategies;
- teachers' calm control, including good use of voice;
- pair and small group activities that allowed all pupils to participate; and
- open-ended questioning that encouraged pupils to answer at length.

There were some shortcomings in about half of the lessons observed. These included, in varying degrees:

- slow pace;
- expectations that were too low about what pupils could achieve;
- a lack of challenge for some able pupils and too little support for slower learners;
- an assumption that all learners understood teachers' explanations immediately without the need for repetition or re-wording; and
- too little practice of skills and consolidation of learning.

In many subjects, there is regular and analytical marking that conforms to the school's guidelines. Marking indicates errors and gives pupils constructive suggestions on how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not consistent within some departments and is barely evident in a minority. Some teachers, for example, do not adequately indicate errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and do not provide good advice on how to improve.

The school and subject departments keep good records of pupils' progress. These allow comparison of performance across and within departments, and allow progress managers to identify pupils who underachieve. Pupils and their parents receive succinct and useful termly reports in each subject. These provide grades to indicate progress and effort, as well as pupils' own targets for improvement. However, reports do not include annual comments by the teacher.

R3: develop and implement consistently a systematic and rigorous process for monitoring and evaluation at all levels of management

The arrangement for each department to be linked to a senior manager is now formalised and much more consistently practised. There is a common agenda for addressing whole school and departmental issues and a formal record of each meeting is passed on to the headteacher. Arrangements are in place to enable the link senior manager to meet more regularly with departments that require greater support. The link manager also conducts lesson observations and provides feedback to teachers. There is evidence that this process is now more valued by teachers and is helping them to improve their teaching skills as well as developing their own skills of observing other teachers' lessons within their department. In some departments, teachers undertake peer observations. Although there is more monitoring and

evaluation of lessons than before, this practice is not yet sufficiently embedded across all departments.

The school has conducted subject reviews, with support from external consultants, including local authority advisers. Welsh as a second language, modern foreign languages, mathematics and music were reviewed in the autumn term and English and science in the spring term. This process involved book reviews, lesson observations and presentations on best practice in subjects. There is clear evidence that the reviews are leading to improved delivery of many subjects.

All subject leaders have received training on self-evaluation and are now more confident in identifying developmental needs within their subject area. The local authority 'quality circle' groups are also helping staff to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating progress in their subject. All these experiences are developing subject leaders' ability to improve standards. They now give presentations to governors on progress in their department and the priorities for development.

The daily acts of collective worship are now monitored by the leadership team and some examples of good practice are shared amongst staff.

R4: improve the quality of improvement plans at school and subject level

The quality of improvement plans is getting better. The School Improvement Plan is an informative document that includes appropriate proposals for the period 2007-2010. It identifies timescales and includes success criteria.

The whole-school and subject development plans use the Estyn inspection framework's seven key questions as a basis for useful reviews of the current situation. This is helping to ensure that the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation inform development planning. There is some variation in the quality of subject development plans in terms of detail and structure. Some of these, for example, do not identify success criteria. Development plans in general do not make sufficient use of quantitative criteria, especially in relation to improving standards and quality.

Useful Post Inspection Action Plans (PIAP) have been produced at whole-school and subject level in response to issues identified in the Section 28 inspection report. With some exceptions, PIAP objectives have not yet been incorporated into development plans.

R5: continue to work to improve attendance

The school has made good progress in continuing to improve attendance. Whole-school attendance has risen to 91.8%. This is above the average for similar schools in Wales and almost at the school target of 92%.

R6: develop approaches to bilingualism across the school

There have been useful initiatives to increase the use of incidental Welsh. Staff have welcomed useful training and guidance to promote the use of Welsh for heading work and basic greetings. There are encouraging signs that these initiatives are beginning to have an impact. They are helping to raise pupils' awareness of Welsh as a living language and are increasing their opportunities to come into contact with Welsh outside their Welsh lessons. In some subjects other than Welsh, teachers use the language to comment on pupils' written work.

There are still shortcomings in the provision and delivery of Welsh as a subject. Time allocation for the short course continues to be inadequate. Too many pupils are not entered for an examination in key stage 4 (25% in 2007). The great majority of pupils are entered for the short course and at the lower tier (around two-thirds of entries). Pupils' attainment does not compare favourably with predictions, especially at the higher grades. Few pupils achieve grades A*, A or B. Current development plans do not give sufficient attention to addressing these issues.

R7: develop further the role of governors in the strategic management of the school

The new governing body is more involved in the strategic aspects of school planning and decision making. Governors are consulted on early drafts of development plans and make positive contributions to the construction of these plans. In particular, the strategic group now has an opportunity to discuss, in much greater detail, the priorities for the school and how resources should be targeted.

Governors have received training on the use of data and are becoming familiar with data sources such as FFT. The LEA has also contributed to raising governors' awareness of their roles and responsibilities through contributions from the relevant officer.

Many, though not all, governors are becoming increasingly aware of departments' strengths and areas for development. Every department in the school has a link governor who receives all the minutes from the department's meetings. The governors also make themselves available to discuss any relevant matters with the subject leader.

R8: satisfy the requirements to provide all pupils with a daily act of collective worship

The school now conforms to legal requirements for collective worship. Pupils behave appropriately and generally take an interest, though the quality of their experiences varies. In the best practice, pupils and teachers discuss the 'thought for the day' well, but in some tutor periods there is scope to exploit it better by exploring ideas arising from it more imaginatively.

Since July 2007, the school has used various methods to monitor collective worship. The school has usefully extended the scope of this monitoring to include issues such as punctuality, uniform, incidental Welsh, completion of registers and pupils' use of their planners.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- continue to improve performance in external examinations at key stage 4;
- raise standards further in Welsh and address the issues in its provision and delivery;
- continue to improve teaching and assessment;
- ensure greater consistency and ownership of the process of monitoring and evaluating standards, and make sure that the best practice is shared across the school;
- incorporate PIAP objectives into departmental development plans and ensure more use is made of quantitative success criteria;
- make sure that all governors have a clear overview of the performance of all subject departments; and
- increase the opportunities for pupils to reflect on the 'thought for the day'.