



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: Significant Improvement**

**Denbigh High School
Ruthin Road
Denbigh
LL16 3EX**

Date of visit: June 2018

by

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

Outcome of visit

Denbigh High school is judged to have made insufficient 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 increasing the level of follow-up activity.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school following receipt of the action plan, to ensure that it is suitable and likely to bring about the required improvements. Inspectors will visit the school again, in a further four to six months' time, to monitor progress in addressing a sample of the recommendations.

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.

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. as 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.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Raise standards at keys stage 4, in particular for girls

In 2017, performance at key stage 4 fell and was lower than at the time of the core inspection in most indicators. The performance of girls was lower in the majority. Since the inspection, pupils have made less progress than expected in nearly all indicators and significantly less in many. Their performance does not compare well to that of pupils in similar schools.

The school has started to introduce a suitable range of strategies to improve the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, these are mostly recent introductions and have not led to the improvements necessary in pupil outcomes.

In lessons, around half of the pupils complete enough work and develop their knowledge and skills appropriately. A minority demonstrate secure recall of previous learning and use it in new situations such as explaining how contour lines can be used to determine why the site for the settlement of Denbigh was chosen.

Around half of pupils do not listen with sufficient attention or respect. As a result, they miss important information and instructions. A minority of pupils provide brief underdeveloped verbal responses, although these are frequently simple guesses to the teacher's questions. A few pupils provide suitably developed verbal responses on topics such as the conditions necessary for early settlement. A very few, more able pupils demonstrate a developing sense of how to use rhetoric following thoughtful analyses of speeches by Martin Luther King and Barack Obama.

The majority of pupils can skim or scan suitably, finding information on topics including the eruption of Mount St Helens, the lives of Josiah Wedgwood and Richard Arkwright and the importance of performing arts in the curriculum. A minority use inference and deduction suitably when reading non-literary texts on topics such as mountaineering and social networking sites and to enhance their understanding of travel writing, such as Bryson's view of Llandudno. In addition, pupils use these skills to consider mood in literary texts such as 'Heroes' and culpability in 'An Inspector Calls'. However, a minority of pupils do not have an appropriate range of reading strategies to support their learning, which contributes to them making less progress than expected.

Around half of pupils write suitably in a range of genres including blogs, film reviews, formal letters and descriptive accounts. While a majority understand the purpose of their writing, many lack a clear sense of audience. As a consequence, they make incorrect language choices and their writing lacks the correct tone. Close to half of pupils do not produce writing that is technically secure and structured suitably. They continue to make basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, including confusing tense, using subordinate clauses rather than full sentences, and comma-splicing.

The majority of pupils have a suitable grasp of basic number skills, including the four rules and calculations with percentages. For example, in food technology, Year 8 pupils calculate successfully the cost of ingredients when preparing a gâteau. In addition, the majority use data accurately, for example in geography to produce graphs to illustrate the link between infant mortality and prosperity in different countries. A few, more able pupils interpret graphs and charts well to draw thoughtful conclusions about the data. However, in general, pupils have difficulty in applying mathematical concepts to solve everyday problems. This is most often due to a lack of deep understanding of concepts.

The performance of boys in the level 2 threshold, including English and mathematics fell sharply in 2017. That of girls also fell and both are lower than in similar schools. Overall, performance in this indicator is considerably lower than expected. In the capped points score, girls did slightly better than in 2016. However, performance overall in this indicator is lower than at the time of the inspection, remains below expectations and does not compare well with that in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five GCSE or equivalent grades at A*-A improved in 2017.

At the time of the core inspection, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals was better than that of the same group of pupils in similar schools in the majority of indicators. However, in 2017 it fell sharply and was lower than in similar schools in most indicators and well below in many.

R2. Improve behaviour and attendance

The school has recently reviewed and revised approaches to improving pupil attendance and behaviour. However, the response to this recommendation has been very slow, particularly in the year following the inspection, and has had little impact overall on either attendance or behaviour.

In 2016-2017, attendance improved but remained well below expectations and continued to compare poorly with that in similar schools as it has in each of the previous three years. The recent appointment of an attendance officer has contributed to improved attendance over the past four months. However, unverified data indicates that attendance for 2017-2018 has fallen sharply and is much lower than at the time of the inspection.

The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals improved very slightly in 2016-2017, although it remained well below that of the same group of pupils in similar schools and in schools nationally. The unverified figure for 2017-2018 suggests a significant decline in the attendance of this group of pupils to a point much lower than at the time of the inspection. In 2017, the overall level of persistent absence fell, particularly that of girls, despite a slight increase in that of boys.

Since the inspection, the school's pastoral structure has reverted to a year group system with the intention of providing greater consistency in supporting pupils' academic progress and wellbeing. Following consultation with staff and pupils, a revised behaviour policy was introduced in early 2018 and very recently an internal exclusion room has been introduced. Staff have recently received appropriate professional learning opportunities to promote good behaviour and respect. However, teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently and the exclusion room has had no obvious impact as the number of recorded behavioural incidents and the rate of fixed term exclusions remain high.

In close to half of lessons, inappropriate behaviour or poor attitudes to learning including a lack of resilience, limited concentration and an over-reliance upon the teacher, allied to shortcomings in teaching, limit pupils' progress.

R3. Strengthen the quality of teaching and the provision for skills

The school has started to introduce a suitable range of strategies to improve the quality of teaching. This includes a focus on improving teachers' questioning and behaviour management skills and the sharing of effective practice. However, these are mostly recent introductions and have not had sufficient impact on the quality and consistency of teaching.

In many lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and the majority foster positive working relationships with pupils. They monitor pupil progress closely and offer valuable verbal feedback that helps pupils to progress in their learning.

Around half of lessons are planned suitably. In these lessons, teachers provide interesting activities and helpful resources that develop pupils' subject knowledge and skills effectively. They use questioning techniques that probe and develop pupils' understanding appropriately.

In around half of lessons, teaching is not effective enough. In these lessons, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not plan activities that engage or challenge pupils of all abilities well enough. This contributes to a slow pace of learning and pupil disengagement. Frequently, these teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to think deeply or develop their independent learning skills. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not manage pupil behaviour well enough.

The school has recently made improvements to its provision for skills. This includes departments taking the lead on respective skills and, very recently, nominated individuals quality assuring the opportunities they provide. The school provides pupils with a suitable range of opportunities to practise their reading and writing skills. However, in a minority of lessons, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills are restricted by the overuse of worksheets. In addition, teachers' feedback to pupils on the quality and accuracy of their writing is particularly underdeveloped. Although there are regular opportunities for pupils to use their information retrieval skills, there are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for them to develop higher order reading skills.

The school provides pupils with an appropriate range of worthwhile opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in relevant subjects. However, the provision for the development of their numerical reasoning and problem solving skills, both within mathematics and across the curriculum, is underdeveloped.

The school uses data from a range of baseline tests to track suitably the progress that individual pupils make in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. It uses this information well to identify pupils with weaker skills and provide them with suitable support.

Plans to develop pupils' information and communication technology skills across the curriculum are at an early stage of development.

Provision for Welsh enables pupils to make sound progress, with the majority gaining a level 2 qualification.

R4. Strengthen leadership across the school, with a particular focus on the systems and arrangements to support pupil wellbeing

Since the core inspection in November 2016, initiatives to address weaknesses in the quality of leadership have not been implemented quickly or robustly enough. Following the core inspection, senior leaders did not show sufficient urgency in addressing important areas for improvement. As a result, leadership across the school has had little impact on improving outcomes, provision and the support for pupils' wellbeing. The current senior leadership team does not demonstrate the ability to secure the improvements required.

The school has recently started to address weaknesses in key areas of leadership. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher and, very recently, two associate assistant headteachers. These changes are helping to distribute leadership responsibilities more appropriately. The headteacher is beginning to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of their work. Meetings at all levels now

focus primarily on standards and pupils' progress. Despite these recent changes, progress in strengthening key areas of the school's work, such as pupils' behaviour and attendance and the quality of teaching, has been too slow. While the school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy and clear procedures for promoting good behaviour and respect, these are not applied rigorously enough.

Senior leaders have not challenged and supported middle leaders well enough to help them carry out their roles effectively. This has contributed to a minority of middle leaders not providing effective leadership to their areas of responsibility.

There have been recent changes to the governing body, which now provides a suitably robust level of challenge and support to the school. The school currently runs a large deficit budget and is holding discussions with the local authority to approve a licensed deficit recovery plan.