Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

Ysgol Ty Coch

Lansdale Drive
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Pontypridd
RCT
CF38 1PG

Date of visit: September 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Ysgol Ty Coch is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His 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

R1. Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning has improved notably since the core inspection. Leaders have established clear expectations through an agreed framework that sets out what effective teaching looks like. This, together with more systematic monitoring, helps staff to understand the school's expectations and is contributing to greater consistency in classroom practice.

Overall, teachers personalise learning appropriately to meet pupils' individual needs. They draw on pupils' individual development plan (IDP) targets, prior learning and their communication and sensory needs to identify suitable next steps and adapt activities and resources. Staff across the school integrate assessment opportunities into day-to-day teaching and maintain beneficial detailed progress information about individual pupils. Regular pupil progress and transition meetings help staff to review this information and refine their approaches. This helps ensure that learning is relevant and accessible and enables pupils to participate purposefully and make progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers and teaching assistants provide valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in meaningful, real-life contexts. For example, where appropriate, pupils research the cost of items at different supermarkets, use calculators to compare prices and consider whether they can afford purchases within a given budget. They then practise selecting items and paying for them in a mock shop, using their communication folders and symbols with increasing confidence. Regular visits to local shops and the wider community enable pupils to apply these skills in authentic situations and strengthen their communication, social and independence skills.

The development of the school café provides another purposeful context for pupils to practise important independent living and work-related skills. Together, these experiences build effectively on classroom learning, develop pupils' numeracy and communication skills and help them to become increasingly confident and independent.

As a result, pupils are well prepared to apply their learning in the wider community and for life beyond school.

A particularly strong feature of the school's work is the quality and relevance of professional learning and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders align training closely with findings from monitoring and the identified needs of individual staff. Weekly professional learning, focused departmental training, coaching and modelling address important priorities such as communication, assessment for learning, scaffolding, challenge and responsive teaching. Teaching and learning champions increasingly model effective practice and coach colleagues, and middle leaders make an important contribution to evaluating teaching and supporting improvement. Staff returning from extended absence receive beneficial support to help them develop their practice. This sustained and tailored approach is developing staff expertise, strengthening leadership capacity and helping to embed consistent approaches across the school.

Overall, across the school, clear routines, visual timetables and well-considered communication and improving sensory approaches help pupils to understand expectations and engage purposefully in learning. Nearly all staff know pupils well and respond sensitively to their needs. In a very few instances, activities lack a sufficiently purposeful context for learning. In addition, during a few activities, pupils spend periods waiting for individual support rather than participating throughout. This limits pupils' engagement and opportunities to learn.

Although the quality of teaching and support for learning has improved notably overall, a small amount of variability remains, particularly in the extent to which activities are sufficiently purposeful, and adults are deployed effectively to promote pupils' sustained engagement and independence.

Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together in many classes. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution through their detailed knowledge of pupils and increasingly understand how to support learning without creating unnecessary dependence. Where practice is strongest, staff use modelling and carefully considered prompts before withdrawing support as pupils become more confident and independent.

The work of the specialist behaviour team contributes to the increasingly consistent approach to supporting pupils' behaviour and emotional regulation. Alongside improvements in communication and sensory support, nearly all staff have a better understanding of how to anticipate and respond to pupils' individual needs. This helps pupils to remain settled and ready to learn and contributes to a notable reduction in behaviours of concern and dysregulation.

R2. Establish a consistent communication system to support all pupils' understanding, expression, and engagement

Overall, across the school, staff have a strong understanding of pupils' widely differing communication needs and abilities. They use a broad range of consistent approaches, including speech, symbols, text, visual prompts, and signing, and generally match these well to individual pupils. As a result, many pupils communicate their needs, wants and preferences successfully and develop increasing confidence and independence in making choices.

A particular strength is the way staff provide frequent and purposeful opportunities for pupils to communicate throughout the school day. Pupils use symbols, signing and other communication approaches to request drinks, indicate when they need to use the toilet, choose their lunch or ask to access preferred activities such as the sensory room or using a swing. In particularly effective examples, pupils combine symbols and text to construct simple sentences and communicate their intentions clearly. Staff respond appropriately to these communications, helping pupils to understand that their choices have meaning and influence what happens next.

Staff make effective use of whole-class and individual visual schedules. These are well established across the school and are adapted appropriately to pupils' needs. They help pupils understand routines, anticipate what will happen next and manage transitions successfully. Where appropriate, pupils take an increasingly active role in using their schedules, for example by removing or repositioning symbols and text as activities are completed. This supports pupils well in developing independence and a greater understanding of their daily routines.

Sensory and physical activities are generally planned thoughtfully and engage pupils well. Staff make and adapt a wide range of suitable resources to develop pupils' gross and fine motor skills, balance, co-ordination and spatial awareness. Activities include an appropriate balance of opportunities for pupils to make their own choices alongside more targeted experiences.

Nearly all pupils engage positively in activities and follow staff instructions carefully. Positive working relationships and staff's knowledge of individual pupils contribute effectively to pupils' readiness to engage and learn. However, in larger classes, the number of pupils and adults can make it more difficult for staff to notice and respond consistently to pupils. At times, this limits opportunities for pupils to initiate communication and have their contributions recognised promptly.

Overall, the increasingly consistent use of appropriate communication approaches, visual support, purposeful sensory experiences and practical learning experiences provides pupils with valuable opportunities to communicate, make choices and develop their independence. Importantly, the school is increasingly sharing communication strategies with parents and carers, helping them to understand and respond to their child's needs and enabling pupils to communicate more effectively across home, school and community settings. These approaches contribute positively to pupils' engagement in learning and their ability to participate more independently in everyday activities.

R3. Work with the local authority to improve the quality of the learning environment to meet the needs of all pupils

The school is in the second year of a five-year programme of refurbishment undertaken in partnership with the local authority. The headteacher and leaders have managed the programme carefully, with much of the work taking place during the summer holidays and causing minimal disruption to pupils' learning. The improvements made so far have enhanced the quality and suitability of the learning environment.

Refurbished classrooms provide calm, low-arousal environments that are increasingly well matched to pupils' needs. Improved storage helps staff to minimise clutter and unnecessary distractions, while careful consideration has been given to neutral colour schemes, displays and classroom furniture. Consistent zoning helps pupils to understand the purpose of different areas and supports them to navigate classroom routines with greater confidence. Many classrooms also benefit from adjoining spaces that provide valuable opportunities for small-group teaching, individual support, sensory activities and emotional regulation.

Staff use the improved environment alongside increasingly consistent approaches to communication and regulation. A range of communication systems such as communication boards, symbols, and visual supports are readily available within classrooms. These help pupils to understand routines, express choices and communicate their needs well. Regulation spaces provide pupils with appropriate areas to manage their sensory and emotional needs. Staff make thoughtful use of environmental cues. For example, recorded songs and music are used effectively to signal transitions between activities and help pupils anticipate changes in routine. Together, improvements to the accommodation, including the décor, and the increasingly consistent, developmentally appropriate approach to communication are having a positive impact on pupils' engagement, independence and readiness to learn.

Improvements to the wider environment support pupils' accessibility and reduce potential barriers to learning. Storage areas for standing and walking frames and wheelchairs help to keep corridors clear and accessible for pupils with mobility needs.

In the dining hall, screening around the serving hatch reduces unnecessary visual distractions and contributes to a calmer environment for pupils who use this area as part of their everyday learning. In addition, pupils benefit from the support of local businesses with the addition of play and sensory equipment in the garden.

The school has also developed valuable facilities that provide older pupils with purposeful opportunities to practise skills for adult life. The redevelopment of a former double garage into a functioning café enables pupils to develop their confidence and communication skills through serving customers and providing produce made or grown at the school. A new domestic kitchen, equipped with appliances including a washing machine and dishwasher, provides further meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop practical independence skills.

Despite these improvements, a few classes have around fourteen pupils. Given the complexity and range of pupils' needs, these large class sizes, in a few cases, make it difficult for staff to model, observe and respond consistently to pupils' communication needs.

There has also been considerable change within classes, with many teachers new to their current class this year. In addition, pupils within classes may be unfamiliar with one another. Despite this degree of change, the increasingly consistent organisation of classrooms, communication systems and approaches to supporting regulation provides pupils with helpful structure and predictability.

Overall, the substantial and continued improvements to the accommodation, alongside increasingly consistent approaches to communication and regulation, are creating calmer, more purposeful and accessible learning environments. These changes are supporting pupils well to understand routines, communicate their needs, regulate their emotions and sensory needs, and develop greater confidence and independence.

R4. Further strengthen leadership at all levels

Leadership has strengthened considerably since the core inspection. The headteacher and senior leaders provide thoughtful, compassionate and clear direction and maintain a sustained focus on addressing the recommendations, despite significant staffing changes, accommodation and capacity pressures. Leaders have established a strong team ethos and a clear vision for improvement. Roles and responsibilities are better defined and increasingly distributed, resulting in greater accountability and collective ownership of school improvement.

A notable strength is the development of shared leadership at all levels. Senior and middle leaders, teachers and other staff increasingly understand their contribution to improvement and take responsibility for important aspects of the school's work.

Middle leaders are empowered to monitor provision, lead professional learning and support colleagues, while teaching and learning champions and the behaviour team further extend expertise across the school. The way leaders at all levels work collectively to address important priorities at is a particularly strong feature of the school's improvement work.

The school's 'Learn, Apply and Build' (LAB) team make a valuable contribution to this developing model of distributed leadership.

They bring staff together to analyse pupils' behaviour, emotional needs and barriers to learning and translate this information into practical improvements in teaching and learning. The inclusion of an emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) and trauma informed practitioners within this team, further strengthens the link between pupils' emotional well-being, behaviour and learning. There is useful evidence that this work is contributing to more personalised provision, stronger pupil Individual Development Plans (IDPs)and reductions in pupils' dysregulation.

Leadership capacity has been strengthened through a range of beneficial, targeted professional development opportunities. This contributes effectively to improvements in provision across the school. In addition, the professional learning of all staff is closely aligned to whole school priorities and individual development needs. For example, weekly training, coaching, mentoring and opportunities enables staff to share effective practice. This sustained investment in staff development strengthens professional confidence and accountability and contributes to greater consistency, for example, in teaching and learning, communication and behaviour support.

Leaders have strengthened self-evaluation and quality assurance substantially. They draw on an increasingly broad range of evidence, including internal monitoring and evaluation systems, lesson observations, learning walks, pupil progress meetings and performance management. Importantly, leaders increasingly evaluate their work in terms of its impact on pupils rather than whether planned actions have been completed. They know the school well, identify weaker practice accurately and provide targeted support where necessary.

The school has strengthened its work with parents and carers effectively and is developing a more purposeful partnership with families. Leaders canvass parents' and carers' views regularly and use this feedback appropriately to shape provision. The creation of a family liaison officer post has increased the school's capacity to engage with families and provide a consistent point of contact. Initiatives such as coffee mornings and end-of-term class celebrations provide valuable opportunities for parents and carers to develop positive relationships with staff and become more involved in school life. These approaches are beginning to strengthen communication and build trust between home and school.

Leaders' actions support greater consistency in teaching and communication, calmer and more purposeful learning environments, improved engagement and independence, and reductions in behaviours of concern.

There is an increasingly clear link between leadership actions, improvements in provision and pupils' outcomes.

Governors are increasingly well informed, and first-hand visits help them understand the impact of improvement activities. Their contribution to supporting and challenging leaders in shaping strategic priorities is developing appropriately.

Overall, leadership capacity, self-evaluation and improvement processes are considerably stronger and increasingly sustainable. Leaders have a clear understanding of remaining priorities, including, strengthening sensory provision and ensuring that the strongest practice in teaching and learning is embedded consistently across the school.

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