



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Priority Childcare

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

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

About Priority Childcare

Priority Childcare is an independent school providing in-house education for children aged 8 to 18 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and who are not able to access mainstream education. The school opened in 2015 and operates in classrooms at four of the company's seven children's homes across four counties in South Wales.

There are currently 13 pupils on roll at the school. All pupils are looked after by their local authorities. Nearly all pupils are resident in the company's children's homes. Many pupils have statements of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2016 and oversees the education across the four sites. The headteacher is supported by one lead teacher. The delivery of lessons, across the four sites, is undertaken, in the main, by teaching assistants.

The school was last inspected in November 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

Pupils are courteous to staff, one another and visitors. They work diligently on shared and individual tasks, listen intently to instructions, question appropriately and complement each other on their work.

Staff know their pupils very well. They establish and maintain trusting relationships with pupils and this contributes to the high level of pupil engagement and positive behaviour.

Staff are patient, particularly when assisting pupils in understanding and responding appropriately to their feelings.

The school is beginning to benefit from the links it has established with local regional educational consortium and other maintained special schools.

Areas for development

The school does not comply fully with the Independent School Standards [Wales] Regulations 2003.

Overall, progress in implementing the recommendations of the core inspection in 2018 is too slow. In particular the school does not work well enough with partners to ensure that self evaluation processes identify areas for development well enough.

The current staffing structure does not allow the school to quality assure its work well enough.

The school does not have a strategic approach to developing the skills of teaching assistants to support pupils in their learning.

Professional learning opportunities for all staff are underdeveloped.

Links between the school and the care homes to support the formal and informal learning of pupils are disjointed and underdeveloped.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Ensure that the school complies fully with the Independent School Standards [Wales] Regulations 2003
- R2 Formalise links with schools and other organisations to strengthen improvement planning processes
- R3 Increase the pace of activity to meet the recommendations of the core inspection in 2018
- R4 Review the roles and responsibilities of all staff
- R5 Formalise professional learning opportunities for all staff

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous note of visit or inspection report

Recommendation 1: Ensure that self-evaluation processes focus more clearly on the standards pupils achieve and the quality of teaching

The school has begun to introduce a number of suitable activities to strengthen its understanding of its strengths and areas for development. These include discussions with school staff, visits to other schools and the use of external consultants. In addition, the headteacher has established contact with headteachers of special schools. However, the school has not developed systematic processes, or capitalised on links with other professionals, in developing a thorough self-evaluation and improvement planning process. For example, it does not make good enough use of the limited tracking information it has on pupils. In addition, the school does not routinely capture the views of senior leaders within the Priority Childcare organisation, care home staff, parents or pupils.

The school has identified a number of improvement priorities. These include developing pupils' skills, the introduction of a tracking system to monitor the progress that pupils make and professional development for staff. The focus on developing pupils' skills is generally limited to purchasing computer software and does not focus as well as it could on improving the skills of the teaching assistants who provide direct teaching and coaching for many of the pupils registered at the school.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that staff assess pupils' standards in subjects across the curriculum and use the information to plan for progression

The school uses a range of baseline assessments to establish pupils' ability on entry to the school and has very recently introduced an electronic system to monitor and track the progress that pupils make in their learning. These are generally aligned to national curriculum levels. Leaders at the school recognise that the assessments used do not identify the needs of all the pupils well enough.

Teaching assistants generally provide pupils with useful feedback on their work. They use praise well. Written comments are positive and celebratory. However, there are missed opportunities to correct pupils' work.

The lead teacher is responsible for co-ordinating the assessment of pupils' needs, monitoring pupils' progress, planning the curriculum, advising teaching assistants across the four school sites and planning the individual lessons for all pupils. The breadth of the responsibility, coupled with a full-time teaching commitment, means that the school is not able to meet the requirements of this recommendation well enough. The current arrangements are unwieldy and unsustainable, and compromise overall improvement in the school.

The school has recently introduced a useful tool for identifying and tracking a range of information in relation to pupils' wellbeing and developmental needs. It is beginning to use this information purposefully in setting targets in individual education plans.

Recommendation 3: Improve pupils' writing skills

Since the core inspection, the school is beginning to prioritise the progress that pupils make in writing.

Many pupils are beginning to write for a wide range of audiences and for different purposes. For example, following visits to a local dog rescue centre, church farm and gardening facility, pupils produce portfolios, and write reflective diaries and recipes for the vegetables they have grown. A few pupils write extended pieces of work. They are beginning to develop effective skills in planning and editing their writing.

A minority of pupils write with greater independence and enthusiasm. As a result, they are developing positive attitudes to writing. A minority of pupils develop their presentation skills well. They demonstrate an understanding of appropriate vocabulary and structure, including the use of paragraphs.

Staff are beginning to identify and share good practice and identify their own training needs. However, there is no strategic or consistent approach for supporting staff to improve the teaching and assessment of writing. Weaknesses in quality assurance limit the progress that pupils make.

Recommendation 4: Improve pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to research and present work

The school has recently introduced a suitable range of applications that support pupils' engagement with ICT more widely. As a result pupils are beginning to develop a useful range of skills. However, pupils have limited access to computers.

Most pupils make appropriate use of ICT to research and present their work, for example when using the internet to search for recipes to follow in catering lessons and researching the Black Death.

Pupils access online presentations to inspire them to write their own poetry and make presentations on topics of study and personal interest. This develops valuable skills across curriculum areas, confidence and self-esteem.

Recently, staff have begun to collaborate with other schools in order to identify and share good practice. However, the co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is under developed. As a result, staff do not have the necessary skills to plan systematically so that pupils make the necessary progress in this valuable skill.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

- Ensure the school has a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement these effectively 1[3][a]
- Ensure that lessons are lessons well planned, teaching methods effective and suitable activities used, and to manage time wisely 1[3][c]

Standard 2: The spiritual, moral, and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

- Ensure that the school has prepared and implemented written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with Welsh Government Circular 005/2008; Keeping Learners Safe 158/2015; Safeguarding children in Education: The role of local authorities and governing bodies under the Education Act 2002; Welsh Government Circular 009/2014 Safeguarding children in Education: Handling allegations of abuse against teachers and other members of staff. 3[2][b]
- Ensure that the school maintains an admission and an attendance register accordance with The Education [Pupil Registration] [Wales] Regulations 2010. 3[9]

Standard 4: The suitability of proprietors and staff

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 4.

Standard 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 5.

Standard 6: The provision of information

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 6.

Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 7.

Recommendation regarding registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government may wish to have regard to the following recommendation:

The school does not currently meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school should address the issues identified above for each standard.

Inspectors' judgements on this limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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