

A report on

Red Rose School

**Allensbank Cresecent
Heath
Cardiff
CF14 3PR**

Date of inspection: March 2025

by

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

About Red Rose School

Name of provider	Red Rose School
Proprietor status	Red Rose School Cardiff Limited
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	49
Pupils of statutory school age	44
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	14/06/2023
Start date of inspection	17/03/2025

School context:

Red Rose School is an independent school based in Cardiff and operates as a private company, limited by guarantee without share capital. It provides additional learning provision for up to 50 pupils aged 7 to 19 who have experienced challenges in mainstream education. This includes pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, or autism spectrum conditions (ASC). The school opened in December 2009.

There are currently 49 pupils on roll, the majority of whom are of secondary school age. All pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) or equivalent. A minority of pupils are care-experienced children. All pupils are placed by Welsh local authorities, with the majority coming from Cardiff.

The school was originally located in a community building in the Heath area of Cardiff. Over time, it has expanded its provision to include additional buildings on this site, a large site in a converted church in the Pontcanna area of Cardiff, and a farm.

The proprietor also serves as the headteacher and is supported by a deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers.

The school was last inspected during a monitoring visit in June 2023.

Summary

Red Rose School offers a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, valued and proud to belong. The school's strong sense of community and commitment to kindness are reflected in the positive relationships between pupils, staff and families. Parents appreciate the regular and effective communication they receive from the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, combining academic and vocational pathways tailored to pupils' individual needs. There is a clear emphasis on developing independence through real-life learning experiences, such as cooking, travel training and personal finance. The majority of pupils benefit from practical learning on the school farm. The curriculum supports pupils to re-engage with learning, and over time, the majority of pupils show improved attendance. However, the curriculum does not include learning about protected characteristics or the risks of radicalisation well enough.

Teaching is generally effective, with most staff using creative approaches used to engage pupils. Staff implement consistent routines that support pupils' learning and well-being. Many pupils make secure progress in developing literacy, numeracy, physical and creative skills. However, in a few cases, teaching lacks sufficient pace or challenge, and a few staff are less confident in delivering specialist subjects.

The school has clear safeguarding procedures and well-defined roles. Staff receive regular training, know their pupils well and develop positive, professional relationships with them. However, the school does not place enough emphasis on teaching pupils about protected characteristics and the risks associated with radicalisation. In addition, staff responses to pupil behaviour are occasionally too informal and do not consistently align with the school's behaviour policy.

Leaders are visible and involved in daily school life. They demonstrate passion and commitment, and staff morale is high. Internal staff development is well supported, and recent expansion has brought additional expertise to the team. Although the school collects data on attendance, behaviour and progress, it does not use this information well enough to evaluate the impact of its work or to monitor progress against improvement priorities.

Main evaluation

The Red Rose community

Red Rose School offers a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, valued and proud to belong. The school's strong sense of community and commitment to kindness are reflected in the positive relationships between pupils, staff and families. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils and staff are proud to be part of the school, and parents appreciate the support the school provides.

The school provides highly effective, supportive education, particularly for pupils who have found mainstream school difficult. Its person-centred ethos, strong relationships and flexible learning approach are key strengths and support pupils' re-engagement in education well.

Spotlight - Supporting care-experienced pupils

The school provides particularly strong support for care-experienced pupils, tailoring provision to meet their individual needs with compassion and consistency. Staff maintain regular, effective communication with social workers, carers and local authorities. This helps to ensure continuity of care and education, and promotes a strong sense of belonging. Staff offer flexible timetables and emotional support, and leaders are available beyond school hours where needed. As a result, many care-experienced pupils show an improvement in their engagement in education over time.

Leaders work well with a range of stakeholders to provide inclusive educational and enrichment opportunities that help pupils broaden their understanding of the world. This collaborative approach supports pupils' sense of belonging and personal development, preparing them well for life beyond school. Leaders are unwavering in their commitment to equity, ensuring that all pupils have access to enrichment activities and necessary resources, regardless of financial circumstances.

Parents and carers value the regular and effective communication from the school, which keeps them well informed about their child's progress. The use of digital tools enables timely updates and helps strengthen the home-school partnership.

Staff work effectively with pupils and families to remove barriers to attendance, demonstrating a good understanding of the challenges pupils face. As a result, over their time at the school the majority of pupils show a significant increase in their school attendance. However, for a few pupils, attendance remains a concern.

Curriculum and learning experiences

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that is tailored to meet pupils' individual needs and starting points. It places appropriate emphasis on both vocational and academic pathways to support engagement and improve attendance. The overarching aim of the curriculum is to prepare pupils for working 'towards independence'.

Personal, social, health and education (PSHE) topics are covered well, with a range of learning experiences that enhance pupils' understanding of digital safety, personal safety and awareness of drugs and alcohol. However, while the school promotes an inclusive culture, it does not embed formal curriculum content on protected characteristics well enough.

The majority of pupils benefit from regular access to the school farm, which provides valuable opportunities to develop practical and independent living skills. For example, they learn how to measure feed for the pigs, cows and hens, care for the goats by brushing out their winter coat and learn about the origins of food. These activities are planned in collaboration with teaching staff to enhance curriculum links. For instance, pupils studying photography apply their learning by photographing the new quails on the farm to track their development.

The curriculum allows pupils to personalise their learning alongside core subjects. Staff support pupils effectively to explore future career options and gain relevant accreditation. For example, a few older pupils complete vocational courses in areas such as construction, hair and beauty and childcare.

Towards independence

The school prioritises practical, real-life learning experiences that prepare pupils effectively for greater independence. Nearly all pupils participate in a wide range of activities that support independent living. These include cycling, household tasks, using a launderette, preparing meals, visiting cafés, and managing personal finances, such as opening bank accounts and completing official documents.

Older pupils are supported to develop independent travel skills, including using public transport. In addition, a very few pupils receive additional support to learn to drive and undertake driving theory and practical tests when they are eligible.

The school places a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for their future and have a tailored approach to career preparation. Pupils benefit from external guidance through agencies such as Careers Wales, visits to further education colleges, and mock interviews led by staff. These activities provide pupils with meaningful insight into post-16 pathways and real-world expectations.

Teaching and learning

Most staff at the school take account of pupils' prior learning and experiences when introducing new skills and knowledge. They plan effectively to meet pupils' individual needs. However, the use of assessment data to inform long-term planning and monitor pupil progress is not yet embedded consistently across the school.

Staff make purposeful use of routines to support pupils' learning and well-being. As a result, the majority of pupils engage well in their lessons. For pupils with autistic spectrum condition (ASC), staff implement suitable strategies that support their progress effectively.

In the most effective lessons, teaching is delivered with pace and includes skilful questioning. The majority of teachers use creative and imaginative methods to engage learners. For example, pupils retold the story of 'Beddgelert' using illustrated story stones to develop literacy skills. In numeracy, pupils completed timed challenges to practise sequencing numbers and calculating time differences.

Where teaching is less effective, lessons lack sufficient challenge or pace, which hinders pupils' progress. In a very few lessons, staff lack confidence in delivering specialist subjects such as GCSE mathematics, which negatively impacts pupil engagement and progress. Leaders have identified inconsistencies in teaching and are in the early stages of implementing actions to address these.

Over time, many pupils make secure progress in developing a broad range of skills that support both their learning and personal development. A majority improve their physical skills well through activities such as trampolining and horse-riding. Pupils practise their literacy and numeracy skills at levels generally appropriate to their needs and abilities. Where suitable, many develop their oracy skills well and express their views confidently in class and with visitors.

Many pupils enjoy creative and digital activities. For example, they design stop-motion animations, create digital artwork inspired by Giuseppe Arcimboldo and produce short cartoon videos. In cookery, pupils explore foods from other cultures, such as baking Hokkaido chiffon cupcakes when studying Japan and preparing blinis when learning about Eastern Europe.

Keeping safe, pupil welfare and well-being

The school prioritises pupils' welfare, health and safety, with robust policies and procedures in place. Leaders and staff demonstrate a good understanding of the specific risks associated with their pupil cohort, ensuring that practices are both proactive and responsive.

A significant strength of the school is the strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. The low staff turnover further strengthens relationships, fostering a stable learning environment. Staff take time to understand each pupil's background, strengths and challenges, resulting in tailored support that helps pupils feel valued and understood. Leaders match pupils carefully with staff to ensure they receive support from adults best placed to meet their needs.

The school has well-defined safeguarding roles and responsibilities, supported by clear referral procedures and effective record-keeping systems. Staff receive regular internal safeguarding training, and new staff are inducted appropriately. While staff are trained in safeguarding, there is not a strong enough focus on the Prevent duty or raising awareness of radicalisation within the curriculum. This limits opportunities to develop staff and pupils' understanding of these risks. In addition, while the safeguarding culture is generally strong, a very few informal practices, such as inconsistent responses to pupil behaviour, weaken provision in this area.

Leadership and school improvement

Over time, leaders have developed a learning environment that meets the diverse needs of the pupil cohort. The recent expansion of the school premises has enabled the creation of a wider range of learning spaces, including traditional classrooms, one-to-one rooms, a beauty salon, outdoor areas and a school farm. These spaces promote pupil engagement and foster a strong sense of pride and belonging among pupils and staff.

The school provides valuable professional development opportunities tailored to staff at various stages of their careers. These include national professional qualifications, postgraduate degrees and teaching qualifications. Staff also benefit from input by a clinical psychologist and in-house training. A "grow your own" leadership model supports internal progression, contributing to staff stability and positive relationships with pupils.

Senior leaders are highly visible and actively involved in the daily life of the school. Their dedication, passion and commitment contribute strongly to the school's collaborative and supportive culture. Nearly all staff value the positive working environment, which leads to high morale and a shared sense of purpose. Staff feel trusted and empowered to take initiative, and the strong team ethos fosters mutual respect and collective responsibility.

The increase in the number and the broadening of the ALN profile of pupils have led to an expansion of the staff team, enhancing the school's overall capacity. This has introduced valuable new expertise, such as maths and IT co-ordinators to support developments in teaching and learning and youth engagement workers. As a result, the school has improved curriculum co-ordination, strengthened links with external agencies, and increased access to mental health support, careers guidance and extracurricular opportunities.

Leaders have a clear long-term vision focused on expanding vocational opportunities, developing life skills, and enhancing learning environments to meet pupils' varied needs. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Although the school collects data on pupil progress, attendance and behaviour, it does not use this information systematically to inform strategic planning. Monitoring of school improvement priorities tends to be informal, relying on leaders' day-to-day knowledge rather than measurable success criteria. While self-evaluation is generally accurate, it lacks robust triangulation of evidence, which limits the school's ability to track and evaluate progress effectively. In addition, as the proprietor currently fulfils the role of headteacher, this limits their ability to hold the leadership team to account objectively and reduces the effectiveness of strategic oversight and self-evaluation processes.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The provision of information

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations

We have made five recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Strengthen reference to Prevent duty in safeguarding policies, practices and relevant areas of the curriculum
- R2. Strengthen the delivery of specialist subjects to ensure consistently high-quality and engaging lessons
- R3. Strengthen the use of assessment data to inform strategic planning, monitor pupil progress effectively, and ensure appropriate levels of challenge in all lessons
- R4. Formalise self-evaluation processes through systematic data collection and external validation to track school improvement and evaluate the impact of interventions
- R5. Embed teaching on protected characteristics and raise awareness of the UNCRC more systematically across the curriculum

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carers and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://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 (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework

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

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