

A report on

ACT Schools

**Ocean Park House
East Tyndall Street
Cardiff
CF24 5ET**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

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

About ACT Schools

Name of provider	ACT Schools
Proprietor status	ACT (Holdings) Ltd, a subsidiary of Cardiff and The Vale College
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	42
Pupils of statutory school age	42
Date of previous Estyn visit	18/03/2024
Start date of visit	16/06/2025

School context:

ACT Schools is an independent school which provides education for pupils aged 11 to 16 years who have additional learning needs, specifically social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The school is administered by ACT (Holdings) Ltd, a subsidiary of Cardiff and The Vale College.

There are currently 42 pupils at the school. The majority of the pupils have an individual development plan (IDP). A very few pupils are looked after by local authorities in Wales.

At the time of the inspection in March 2024 the school did not meet the requirements for the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. The Welsh Government asked the school to produce a post-inspection action plan to address the areas of non-compliance. To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below:

Standard 1 – The Quality of Education

The proprietor should ensure that the teaching:

- ensures pupils are enabled to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught [2(3)(a)]
- involves well-planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of learning time, [2(3)(c)]

A team of HMI visited the school in November 2024 and April 2025 to discuss the school's progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in June 2025 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previously non-compliant Standards.

Main findings

Since the core inspection in March 2024, the school has made strong progress in improving its provision. Leaders have established a reflective culture rooted in high expectations and continuous improvement.

The headteacher and head of continuous improvement work together effectively to design and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based quality assurance cycle. This cycle focuses on support rather than compliance and is well understood by staff. It aligns closely with the school's strategic priorities. Through regular meetings, leaders analyse quality assurance findings and identify clear improvement priorities.

Leaders have taken purposeful steps to personalise learning and strengthen curriculum delivery. All pupils have individual learning plans (ILPs) with measurable targets in literacy, numeracy and well-being, which link appropriately to individual development plans (IDPs) where relevant. These plans are reviewed regularly through improved monitoring systems, allowing for timely and appropriate intervention.

The school tracks pupil progress systematically through daily briefings, termly assessments and consistent feedback approaches. The use of 'what went well / even better if' strategies helps pupils understand their learning goals and take greater ownership of their progress. These developments have enhanced pupil motivation. However, the poor attendance of a minority of pupils limits the progress they are able to make.

Staffing changes, including the introduction of lead teacher, inclusion officer and enrichment teacher roles, have strengthened the support available for teaching and pupil engagement. Regular professional learning, reflective planning tools and updated quality assurance processes are helping to maintain a strong focus on teaching consistency and pupil progress.

The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure coherent progression and improved access to enrichment opportunities. Pupils now participate in themed afternoons such as woodworking, gardening and creative arts, which promote practical skills and social development. For example, a recent project with National Theatre Wales engaged older pupils in creative writing and performance work, supporting their communication skills and engagement. Trauma-informed practices are now embedded in teaching and curriculum delivery, promoting both academic and emotional development. Teaching is becoming increasingly consistent and responsive to individual needs.

Activities across the school are structured, purposeful and inclusive. For example, in a food technology session, pupils followed scaffolded instructions and visual prompts to make a cheesecake. In a literacy lesson, pupils wrote diary entries from the perspective of characters affected by natural disasters, drawing on learning from geography.

Teaching methods promote understanding, reflection and engagement. Nearly all staff use open-ended questions and verbal feedback effectively to foster critical thinking and clarify learning. Positive, respectful relationships underpin classroom practice and contribute strongly to engagement. Staff know pupils well and respond with empathy and consistency, which helps to build trust and promote participation. Classrooms are well organised, with displays that celebrate pupils' work. However, aspects of the school environment, particularly the Key Stage 4 area and external space, remain underdeveloped.

Lessons are generally well paced, with smooth transitions and established routines. Teachers plan tasks that match pupils' needs and promote independence. Activities are relevant and informed by up-to-date pupil profiles and ILPs. While teaching includes a range of stimulating tasks, feedback does not always identify next steps for improvement consistently. Nevertheless, staff have made clear progress in refining planning and practice. Regular staff meetings, short lesson evaluations and a shared understanding of emotional well-being are supporting improvements in learner outcomes.

The school's collective efforts have resulted in a learning environment where pupils feel safe, valued and motivated to succeed. Strong leadership, purposeful teaching and robust monitoring systems are helping to ensure that pupils make meaningful progress from their individual starting points. As a result, the school is well placed to sustain and build on these improvements.

Compliance with the standards 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

There is no evidence that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Not considered on this visit

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Not considered on this visit

The suitability of proprietors and staff

Not considered on this visit

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

Not considered on this visit

The provision of information

Not considered on this visit

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Not considered on this visit

Recommendation regarding continued registration

There is no evidence that the school does not comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

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 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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