



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on
Prospects School

Date of inspection: February 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2012: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Context

Prospects School is a specialist school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, which provides education for young people who are subject to care orders and who reside with Prospects for Young People Ltd, as well as offering day placements for young people from a number of local authorities. Prospects for Young People Ltd has 11 different registered care homes all in the Wrexham area, with one of the care homes sharing the site of the school. Prospects School is currently registered for 20 pupils.

The school has a 'continuum of provision'. Pupils are assessed on entry and placed in the following settings according to need. Pupils can move from one setting to another according to how well they adjust to being part of a school again, often after long periods of absence.

1 Nurture provision

The curriculum is based around key skills, attachment theory and therapeutic approaches.

2 Home tuition

Pupils remain in their care homes and teachers teach them individually.

3 Prospects School

Prospects School runs a full timetable of education activities for a group of pupils.

The Continuum is designed to provide a range of flexible options in order to avoid the need for exclusions. These placements are regularly reviewed.

The timetable is designed around three main sections of the day. 'Aspire' focuses on personal and social development, improving social skills and citizenship. The core concentrates on achieving qualifications in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). 'Engage with the community' takes place during the afternoons and provides opportunities to access education activities within the community. These opportunities include a college course, music lessons, the gym, horse riding and charity work.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

The school's current performance is adequate. The strengths include that:

- pupils gain a range of qualifications;
- the majority of pupils move on to further education or training;
- pupils benefit from therapeutic interventions;
- there is an appropriate curriculum to suit pupils' needs; and
- pupils' needs are carefully assessed.

However:

- a significant minority of pupils do not improve their behaviour over time;
- the school council is not effective;
- during the inspection, pupils' attendance and punctuality were poor;
- a fifth of the teaching is unsatisfactory; and
- additional learning needs are not always met.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Prospects school are judged as adequate because:

- the school does not comply with all the regulatory requirements;
- plans and policies do not link together well enough;
- leaders do not focus enough on improving outcomes for pupils; and
- staff do not always take up opportunities to improve their practice.

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 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure there is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age; [1(2)(a)(i)]
- devise a policy to enable pupils to acquire skills in speaking/listening/literacy/numeracy; [1(2)(c)]
- where a pupil has a statement provide education which meets its requirements[1(2)e]

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- improve the anti-bullying policy to have regard for National assembly circular 23/03'Respecting Others: 'Anti-bullying Guidance' [3(2a)]
- make sure that the school maintains an attendance register using the correct codes [3(9)]

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- improve the access to the school such that it allows all pupils, including those with special needs, to enter and leave the school in safety and comfort. Currently access is poor with stepped access at the front entrance and staircase access to the first floor only.(5h)

- prepare an access plan for the school and for Dewis
- the premises do not currently comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Wales) Regulations 2003. They should prepare an access plan to accompany the access policy (5v).

The provision of information

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements on the website [6(2f)]
- provide particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection and health and safety [6(2h)]
- provide particulars of the number of staff employed at the school including temporary staff and a summary of their qualifications [6(2k)]

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the provider needs to:

- R1 take steps to make sure that the school complies fully with the regulations required for registration;
- R2 focus on the standards of achievement and the wellbeing of pupils in all monitoring and subsequent plans for improvement;
- R3 make sure that all pupils' additional learning needs are met;
- R4 provide more opportunities for pupils to be involved in decision-making about the life and work of the school;
- R5 improve the communication and liaison with the care staff to provide a consistent approach to pupils' education, attendance and behaviour;
- R6 improve the planning to improve pupils' basic skills across the school; and
- R7 devise a policy for personal and social education, which links carefully to improved social, emotional and behavioural outcomes for pupils.

What happens next?

Since the inspection report notes that the school does not meet one or more of the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan must set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

It is not appropriate to compare standards with national averages or to analyse trends in performance over time because of the very specific nature of the school.

All leavers in 2011 achieved an external qualification. A few leavers gained between one and four GCSEs and qualifications in vocational based programmes. These included the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, National Vocational Qualification level 1 in hair and beauty and ASDAN awards. The majority of pupils moved on to appropriate further education courses or training after leaving the school, although half of these pupils do not maintain these placements. Just over a quarter of pupils maintain successful placements at local mainstream and special schools and college. As a result, these pupils generally make good progress.

Pupils arrive at the school with very little confidence as learners, unable to manage their behaviour well and with a history of poor attendance. Over time, many make progress towards meeting their individual learning targets. They are proud of these achievements and keen to discuss them. However, a significant minority of pupils do not behave well and waste valuable time. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they should do.

A few pupils learn important skills that they need to live more independently, such as handling money, budgeting, shopping and ironing. However, most pupils do not develop their communication, number and ICT skills well enough and do not make enough use of these skills during all of their lessons. A few pupils use technology well to support their research and present information. However, most pupils do not make enough use of computers to support and redraft their work. Pupils' thinking skills are underdeveloped. They find it difficult to plan or talk about their work or evaluate their own performance. Pupils with additional learning needs and poor basic skills do not make enough progress.

A very few pupils take part in work experiences in the school grounds and with local businesses. They learn to follow instructions, arrive on time and co-operate with others.

Wellbeing: Unsatisfactory

Pupils generally relate well to staff. They benefit from clear guidance on how to keep themselves healthy. As a result, they do not bring fizzy drinks and chocolate to school. Pupils are encouraged to understand the dangers of smoking and receive practical help if they wish to stop. Most pupils enjoy outdoor activities such as rock climbing and horse riding. They do not often attend the extra-curricular sessions after school that the teachers arrange for them.

Pupils take part in a range of therapeutic interventions carefully designed to improve their emotional well-being. In PSE they discuss a range of important issues that may impact on their lives. These include homelessness, drugs, racism and parenting.

The recently revised school council supports charities and helps organise a fun day to raise money. However, it is not as effective as it could be. Three quarters of the eight pupils who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school does not listen to their views. The council has not yet had an opportunity to look at issues that impact on pupils' wellbeing, such as bullying and behaviour. Pupils represent the school on the Community Cohesion Panel, which helps to maintain good relationships within the local area.

A few pupils have made significant strides in learning to improve their levels of self-control and manage their behaviour when in school. They have fewer outbursts and have reduced the number of critical incidents where they put themselves or others at risk. However, a significant minority of pupils do not improve their behaviour over time. They do not always engage in lessons, use bad language and pick and choose which tasks they will complete. This behaviour makes it difficult for others to get on with their work. Just over a half of the pupils who completed the questionnaire disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'pupils behave well and I can get my work done'. During the inspection pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour were poor. Pupils walked out of lessons, left the building, or returned to their homes.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school offers a broad and well balanced curriculum that meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. All pupils have access to a wide range of outdoor learning experiences, including horse care and rock-wall climbing. Pupils are able to use many of these activities towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The school offers a suitable range of curriculum models to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils can move between the school, the nurture centre, home tuition and mainstream schools to meet their individual needs. However, pupils can only access up to 16 hours a week on home tuition. The school liaises well with local colleges and a few employers to enable pupils to take vocational courses and to gain work experiences.

The school offers an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, such as boxing training. The Aspire programme provides pupils with a relevant personal and social education programme that includes information on sex education.

The school carries out an appropriate assessment of pupils' skills needs when they join the school. However, there is no overarching policy or planning for pupils to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills and there is no cross-school strategy for developing pupils' skills within all lessons. This has a negative impact on the progress pupils make with their skills and reading ability. There is no effective planning for pupils of higher ability to develop their higher order reading and writing skills.

The school promotes sustainable development and global citizenship well through the Aspire programme.

Teaching: Adequate

In lessons where teaching is good or adequate, teachers and support staff plan lessons well. They ensure that lessons are structured effectively to provide pupils with an appropriate range of activities and tasks. They understand pupils' needs, have high expectations and use questioning well to extend their thinking and reflection skills. They set clear learning objectives and provide pupils with helpful feedback. However, these teachers do not always inform pupils well enough of the awards and qualifications they are working towards.

A fifth of the teaching is unsatisfactory. In these classes pupils do not have enough opportunity to contribute to setting their own targets and to reflect on their progress. Teachers rely too heavily on worksheets. They do not use assessment results effectively to inform their day-to-day planning and to address individual pupils' needs.

Teachers do not always address health and safety issues in classes well enough. They do not deal effectively enough with poor behaviour. Where pupils do not behave and refuse to go to school or return to their care setting, care staff do not always make use of the folder of work set by the teachers for these occasions.

Assessment of learning within classes is inconsistent. Teachers do not always encourage pupils to self-assess or reflect on their learning. Their feedback to pupils is not detailed enough to help them understand how to get better results. Targets within learning plans are not specific and measurable enough. In a few cases pupils' targets remain unchanged for long periods of time.

Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory

The school provides pupils who have personal issues with appropriate support. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff encourage pupils to understand the feelings and needs of others.

There are a range of suitable policies designed to promote pupils' health and wellbeing. However, there is no personal and social education policy including sex education. As a result, it is unclear how staff will use the curriculum to help pupils understand how to reduce their high risk behaviours, keep themselves safe and improve how they relate to others.

The school uses the company's anti bullying policy. Although it includes strategies to prevent bullying, it does not set out how education staff will tackle the attitudes and prejudice that often underlies these behaviours.

There is written guidance for pupils on how the 'chill out room' should be used for pupils who need an alternative space to become calm. However, the school does not record how many times this room is used, by whom and for how long. Although there is documentation that explains how the room should be used, it is not included in the overall strategy for managing behaviour.

Pupils' additional learning needs are not always met. Learning plans are not used effectively to plan and develop pupils' learning. Targets in these plans focus on behaviour and do not make enough use of the valuable assessment information gained when pupils arrive at the school.

The school's reward scheme is not effective. Pupils can behave badly and still gain the maximum points and meet all of the criteria. This gives pupils mixed messages about what behaviours are acceptable.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school offers an inclusive environment and all pupils have equal access to the school's resources. In general, the school respects the rights and responsibilities of both staff and pupils. The Aspire programme provides pupils with suitable opportunities to reflect on equality and diversity and to challenge stereotypes.

Classrooms and corridors are clean and bright and accommodation is generally of a good standard. Pupils benefit from a school allotment and a football pitch.

Displays on walls are current, interesting and informative. They show many photographs of the various outdoor activities and challenges the pupils have undertaken. However, very few displays celebrate pupils' achievements well.

The Nurture room, for pupils who are not yet ready to move into school, provides a stimulating learning space that helps pupils to integrate back into a school environment. This facility includes a well fitted kitchen area for wider learning experiences.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Adequate
--	-----------------

Leadership: Adequate

A new leadership team has been in place since September 2011. The team has clear aims and strategic objectives and communicates high expectations of staff to improve pupils' learning. It has introduced a model of distributed leadership to take responsibility for school improvement projects. The development of the nurture provision is an example of how this distributed leadership is having a positive impact as it provides very good development opportunities and gives staff ownership of initiatives.

Plans and policies are insufficiently cohesive, implemented and monitored to provide clear evidence of their impact. Although the school has identified many appropriate areas for improvement, these are not always well prioritised and do not focus enough on raising pupils' standards.

The monitoring role of leaders is not rigorous enough. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching and behaviour management are not always recognised. Leaders do not always challenge underperformance in the school by setting realistic targets, for instance relating to improving pupils' literacy skills.

The proprietors have a clear vision for the school. However, they do not challenge the school enough to help it bring about improvements.

A School Advisory Panel is beginning to provide appropriate challenge and informed support. Members of the Panel, including the proprietors, regularly make observations of teaching and provide helpful feedback to staff. Although the Panel have taken positive steps to increase their awareness of how the school operates on a day-to-day basis, they do not know enough about how well the school performs. Their understanding of data on pupils' outcomes, punctuality and attendance is underdeveloped. This means that they do not focus enough on improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for learners.

Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Performance management is used well as a basis for the planning of suitable professional development. Despite staff having access to a range of suitable training opportunities, they do not always take up opportunities to improve their practice. Evaluation of the impact of training is not systematic and linked to self-evaluation and development planning.

The school does not comply with a few of the regulatory requirements.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The school identifies many appropriate areas for development; however, these do not give enough focus to developing pupils' standards and the quality of teaching. Leaders do not use data rigorously and act upon the evidence in a systematic and structured way to inform planning for improvement.

Areas for improvement do not give focus enough on the need to plan more carefully with care staff. This leads to lack of joint planning of a few initiatives, for example the punctuality policy, and has a negative effect on pupils' learning.

While the school links self-evaluation to its improvement plan, the process does not take into account enough first-hand evidence, such as classroom observations. Efficient processes are in place to monitor the progress in meeting the targets in plans, including how these will be resourced, and next steps.

Systems to ensure the quality of pupils' standards are not as good as they should be. The school does not have a coherent system to monitor the quality and consistency of the curriculum delivered. This means that leaders do not know if pupils are making progress on a day-to-day basis. Managers do not keep records of attendance across the school day and of the time that pupils miss when they leave lessons or home tuition. As a result they are unable to work out how much time pupils have missed.

Staff do not consistently make the best of opportunities to improve their practice by learning from the good practice of their colleagues. Although weekly 'surgeries' are available for staff to discuss curriculum and other concerns and provide training sessions, these are not well used. Staff do meet regularly to discuss their work and share ideas, but the focus is most often on behaviour management. Staff reflect on their practice and development activities focus appropriately on improving behaviour

outcomes for pupils. However, this is not having a clear impact on pupils' behaviour, engagement and wellbeing.

Networks of professional practice with other schools are developing and beginning to have an impact on systems for monitoring pupils' wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

The school works with an appropriate range of key partners including placing authorities and parents or carers. Relationships with parents and carers are strong and the school makes sure that there is regular communication. The school has set up a suitable range of partnerships with local businesses and training providers. This widens the opportunities for pupils to develop their work based skills, qualifications and experience. The school has made particularly strong links with a local outdoor education centre. Pupils attend weekly sessions where they develop skills that contribute to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Resource management: Adequate

There are enough teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum. However, strategic planning to cover absenteeism is not efficient. As a result, key functions such as curriculum monitoring and the work of a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) have not been undertaken.

A training officer effectively co-ordinates the training of care and education staff. As a result, there is training of a high quality that is consistent across care and education in important areas of child protection, health and safety and physical intervention.

A suitable performance management system includes lesson observations and formal feedback by the leadership team and members of the School Advisory Panel.

Accommodation and resources meet requirements, although not all pupils receiving home tuition have access to computers and this hampers their learning.

The school has a delegated budget and planning for school improvement includes additional resources.

Overall outcomes for pupils are adequate. This means that the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received responses from eight pupils at the school. Many of these pupils state that they feel safe in school have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. and feel that the school deals well with bullying. All pupils feel that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to take on responsibility. The majority feel that the school encourages them to take exercise and to be healthy. Most agree that staff help them with problems and to learn and make progress. All pupils confirm that the school respects their backgrounds but are not as convinced that the school helps them to respect the backgrounds of others. Most stated that they have enough books or equipment to do their work. Most pupils feel that the school prepares them well for moving on. However, around half of the pupils do not feel that the staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect.

Many pupils feel that they are doing well in school, although the majority say that poor behaviour sometimes stops them from doing their work. The majority of pupils do not feel that the school listens to their views.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Claire Yardley	Reporting Inspector
Sw Roberts	Team Inspector
Gill Sims	Team Inspector
Mathew Burns	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5
David Glaves (Deputy Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at aged 16 or at aged 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at aged 16.
Proprietor	The term 'proprietor', as defined in the Education Act 1996, means the person or people responsible for managing an independent school and can include a sole proprietor, governing bodies, trustees or directors. The ways that independent schools are governed and owned varies a great deal. A proprietor or trust may own a school or the school may have a governing body that appoints a headteacher. Some schools have a combination of these.