



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

Ty Orbis

Date of inspection: October 2011

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.

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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ty Orbis is an independent school situated in a rural location close to the village of Bronllys in Powys. The school provides education for girls and boys pupils aged from 11 to 19 years, who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders.

There are currently nine pupils on the school roll, all of whom are placed by local authorities in Wales. All except one pupil are resident in the registered on-site children's home operated by the proprietor. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and all of the pupils are from English-speaking homes.

In April 2011, there was a change to the school's proprietor. In September 2011, there were significant school staff changes, including a change of headteacher. A new head of education with appropriate experience will take up his appointment in January 2012. There are temporary staffing arrangements in place this term.

The school's stated aim is to provide a safe, happy and stimulating environment for children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder, within a framework of lifelong learning. To this end, the proprietor plans to develop seamless transition for pupils from Ty Orbis to other provision, including the specialist college managed by the organisation.

The school was registered with the National Assembly for Wales in 2006. This is the school's first S163 inspection, although it has received Estyn monitoring inspections annually.

Summary

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

Current performance

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

- most pupils show good recall of their previous learning and make progress overtime;
- most pupils with very complex needs make good progress in developing communication skills;
- all pupils benefit from a wide range of therapies that are designed carefully to support pupils' wellbeing;
- there is an appropriate curriculum that includes good provision for pupils' personal and social education; and
- there are good opportunities for outdoor learning.

However:

- teaching is not always focussed enough to ensure that pupils make progress;
- there is too little use of assessment to identify clear targets for pupils and ensure that lesson planning always meets their needs; and
- links with other partners are underdeveloped and limit opportunities for staff and pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement at Ty Orbis are good because:

- new managers have carried out a thorough and honest self-evaluation of the school and acted quickly to plan appropriately for school improvement;
- managers have already reviewed and improved a range of school documents that include schemes of work;
- the proprietor can provide a wide-range of relevant specialist services from within its organisation to improve the quality of pupils' learning;
- there are good training opportunities for staff, based on needs identified through the self-evaluation and performance management processes; and
- the proprietor has a successful track record of managing good quality provision.

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

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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 that:

- teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; [1(3a)]
- teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves; [1(3b)]
- lessons are well-planned, teaching methods are effective, suitable activities are used and class time is managed effectively; [1(3c)]
- teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons; [1(3d)] and
- provide education which enables all pupils within a class to make progress. [1(5)]

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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:

- assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. [2(e)]

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- R1 take steps to ensure that the school complies fully with the regulations required for registration;
- R2 make sure that more able pupils improve and gain qualifications for their basic skills and also have experience of the world of work;
- R3 provide more opportunities for pupils to be involved in decision-making about the life and work of the school, to make choices, express their feelings and evaluate their work;
- R4 ensure that all lessons have a clear purpose and that teaching is more focussed on raising standards;
- R5 make sure that all staff have a consistent approach to the management of behaviour and punctuality;
- R6 use assessment of pupils' learning more effectively to identify specific targets and include these in lesson planning to ensure that learning experiences always meet pupils' needs; and
- R7 develop more effective partnerships to improve pupils' learning and transition opportunities and ensure that staff are able to share good practice.

What happens next?

The school does not meet the standards required for registration and 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 standard and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what action 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 and carers at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Standards are adequate. Pupils' programmes are individually tailored and it is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time. Due to their very complex learning needs, pupils often make almost imperceptible or very small steps of progress.

Pupils gain a wide range of AQA certificates for skills including chicken feeding, sensory science and the use of symbols to communicate. However, more able pupils do not have the opportunity to gain qualifications for basic skills.

Most pupils remain on task and respond well to individual rewards and praise. Generally they show good recall of previous learning. They listen carefully to stories. A few pupils have developed good reading skills during their time at the school and enjoy practising these skills. This includes reading novels. Pupils with more complex needs show a good understanding of classroom routines. They learn the difference between bigger and smaller, and start and finish. However, more able pupils do not always take care with their writing. They do not use capital letters or full stops appropriately or present their work well.

Most pupils with very complex needs make good progress in developing their communication skills. They use a system of picture exchange well to follow schedules, to understand what will happen next and to make their needs known, but not always enough to make choices, express their feelings or evaluate their work. Where pupils do have limited verbal communication, this is not extended systematically across the school day by all staff. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could do.

More able pupils gain important skills that they need to live more independently, such as handling money, budgeting, shopping and cooking. They use information and communication technology appropriately to reinforce their learning. However, they do not always make enough use of computers to present their work or improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Pupils generally relate well to staff, and can raise issues of concern to them. They feel safe in school. However, there is no school council, and pupils are not consulted enough about their life at school. They do not have an input into choosing or evaluating aspects of their educational programme. This includes the targets in their individual education plans. They do not all regularly reflect on how well they have worked and what they can do to improve.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of therapeutic interventions that have a positive impact on their health and emotional wellbeing. These interventions include speech

and language and occupational therapy, clinical psychology and advice from a dietician. Pupils are learning to express their feelings and particularly enjoy music therapy.

Pupils make good use of the sensory circuit in the barn and the grounds to exercise and relax. They enjoy physical activities such as climbing, walking and swimming.

There are a few good examples of learners with very complex needs who, with the help of the behaviour support team, have made significant strides in improving their levels of self-control and managing their behaviour. They have become calmer and reduced the number of critical incidents where they put themselves or staff at risk. However, on occasion the poor behaviour of a few pupils is not well managed and makes it difficult for pupils in the same group to remain on task.

Pupils have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on issues around sexualised behaviour. They receive the information that they need to keep themselves safe and help them understand what behaviour is appropriate for private and public settings.

Overall attendance is good. However, a few pupils do not attend all sessions throughout the day. They lose too much time by not being punctual. These pupils pick and choose which activities they will take part in. These behaviours are not challenged consistently by all staff and, as a result, pupils miss out on opportunities to widen their learning.

Older pupils do not currently attend college or work experience. As a result, they do not develop the routines that they need to be able to move onto further study or increase their independence enough.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Unsatisfactory
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 and offers pupils appropriate experience. Overall, it is broad and balanced. The new schemes of work produced this term are of good quality and generally meet the needs of pupils. There are good opportunities for learning outside the classroom, such as in animal care and the sensory garden. Pupils also have good opportunities to extend their learning by visiting local facilities including a lake, climbing centre and shops in town.

Recently, the school has improved the use of the communication system and this gives pupils better opportunities to engage in learning. However, they do not have enough opportunity to build on and extend their information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

The curriculum provides subject matter suitable to pupils' abilities but it is not always supported by age-appropriate material or resources, for example reading material. The school does not provide opportunities for pupils to learn enough about the world of work.

The school encourages pupils to contribute to sustainability by participating in the AQA unit on Recycling: Domestic Waste. The school is not required to make provision for Welsh language.

Teaching: Unsatisfactory

In lessons where teaching is good, teachers and support staff have high expectations, plan lessons carefully using assessment results and set challenging work that meets all pupils' abilities and needs. They explain the learning objectives and targets with pupils. They use effective strategies to engage reluctant pupils and are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. They give pupils good quality feedback throughout the school day.

However, too much teaching is unsatisfactory. This is because teachers do not always arrive punctually and lessons do not start on time. They do not share learning objectives with all pupils and the tasks are not fully explained. They do not give pupils the opportunity to contribute to setting their own targets and reflect on their progress. Teachers and support staff often talk amongst themselves and do not involve the pupils in the conversation. They do not model the use of language for pupils. Too often, teachers give pupils breaks after completing a small task rather than keeping up the pace and providing another interesting activity. This does not help pupils maintain a good working routine. Support staff do not show enough initiative in pre-empting situations where pupils become difficult to manage or engage. There are also too many interruptions to lessons and this affects the continuity of learning and levels of pupil engagement.

Teachers do not always use assessment results to inform their day-to-day planning, and make sure that the work set meets the ability and needs of each pupil. The very recent individual education plans are suitably detailed and are used in all classes. However, targets are not always specific to each learner and the plans do not all include behaviour targets. This makes it difficult for staff to measure pupils' progress and to work on the behaviours that need to change.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

There are appropriate arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. The school ensures that pupils now have good access to a range of therapies and specialist services that provide guidance and support. The clinical psychologist and behaviour support team provide comprehensive behaviour support plans that are used well to manage and improve individual pupils' very challenging behaviour. However, these do not link well enough to teachers' lesson plans.

Music therapy provides pupils with very good opportunities to express their feelings and relax.

Pupils have good access to an appropriate personal and social education programme, which addresses their needs as young adults and gives them good support with issues that they may have to deal with when they return to their communities. These include how to behave appropriately in public, sex education and the use of drugs and alcohol.

The school celebrates pupils' achievement in regular acts of collective worship. These occasions give pupils valuable practice in tolerating each other in a larger group. However, pupils are not involved in the decisions about the life and work of the school. There is no school council.

All pupils have up-to-date statements of special educational needs, which are reviewed at statutory annual review meetings. Their individual education plans are suitably detailed but are not always used consistently. Targets are not always specific to each pupil and this makes it difficult for staff to measure pupils' progress.

The school does not make use of appropriate systems to record and deal with pupils' poor punctuality. As a result, the school is not aware of how much education pupils miss over time.

The school has appropriate policies and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Adequate

There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy and pupils show a good understanding of what to do and whom to talk to if they have an issue that concerns them. The school takes account of pupils' individual backgrounds. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to celebrate diversity.

There are a variety of well-maintained areas for work and recreation both in and out-of-doors. There are extensive grounds that include an animal care area with goats and chickens. There is a large covered barn with an indoor sensory circuit. However, classrooms are not all well organised and there is very little pupil work on display.

The school meets the requirements of the premises regulations. However, there is no current planning consent for the temporary classrooms.

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

The proprietor has made very good progress in managing significant change and making appropriate improvements to the school in a short space of time. Leaders and managers bring useful experience and professional expertise to the task and are proactive in planning for school improvement. They ensure that the organisation's specific strategic aims are shared within the school and linked children's home, and also with parents. There are clear, cohesive plans for future development.

Following a review of staff roles and responsibilities, the proprietor has appointed a new principal, head of education and senior management team and restructured the staffing team. This new team has made very good progress in writing, reviewing and updating the school's policies, procedures and schemes of work.

Managers have been successful in ensuring that staffing changes have had minimal impact on pupils' wellbeing. They have used the limited data available to assess pupils' standards appropriately. Placing authorities provide positive feedback about the school's performance.

However, the proprietor's vision for the school's future has not had time to become embedded and is not impacting enough on the day-to-day work of the school. For example, longer serving staff have not adapted easily to the changes in expectation and do not all share the school's vision. The school had not responded well enough to the recommendations following Estyn's monitoring visit in January 2011.

The school meets almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Improving quality: Good

Managers have carried out a thorough self-evaluation process in a short time, based on the limited information available. The process involved staff, placement co-ordinators and findings from a parents' questionnaire. The self-evaluation report is a clear, honest document that highlights the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It recognises that the information about pupils' standards is limited because there are very few records of pupils' progress over time.

The proprietor has already made very good progress in making small, essential improvements, for example to establish a staff performance management system, new schemes of work, a new style individual education plan format and teachers' weekly planning system.

The self-evaluation report has clear links to the school development plan. This plan identifies many appropriate areas for development across all aspects of the school and children's home, and specifies those staff responsible and the timescales involved. The plan is very broad and managers are currently developing a more refined plan to identify and action the most essential priorities.

A suitable performance management system, introduced this term, includes half-termly lesson observations by the education manager with formal feedback to staff. However, the system has not had time to become embedded and impact on staff practice.

There are good opportunities for staff to network and share good practice within the proprietor's education services but these links are at an early stage of development.

Partnership working: Unsatisfactory

Overall, the school has very few links with other partners so pupils do not benefit enough from learning about the wider world.

Early this term, the school hosted a parents' evening to share information with parents about the changes of proprietor and staff, and allow parents the opportunity to discuss the new arrangements. Parents have a good relationship with the school and feel that their children are making progress. They do not think that the changes impacted negatively on their children's development. However, parents do not feel that the school communicates well enough with them or gives them enough opportunity to meet each other.

Placing authorities are positive about the provision and receive appropriate reports on children's progress. They confirm that arrangements for looked-after children's review meetings and annual statement review meetings are appropriate.

The school has a good relationship with the local community and pupils are familiar with facilities such as the village shop and café and, until recently, a local swimming pool. The school has recently met with Careers Wales to help plan appropriately for pupils' futures.

However, many pupils are now aged over 16 and transition plans for their future education are at a very early stage. Although the proprietor intends to build links with its other provision, only one pupil has transferred there previously and there is no clearly established transfer system. Planning for pupils who need placements elsewhere is very limited but the proprietor has identified this as an area for improvement.

There are currently no arrangements for pupils to experience further education opportunities or the world of work either within the school or externally.

Resource management: Adequate

There are enough teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum. The proprietor has introduced a thorough training programme, overseen by a professional training manager, who ensures that all staff receive appropriate good quality training in important areas such as child protection, health and safety and physical restraint, autism and a picture communication system. Staff have good opportunities to identify individual professional training needs and attend relevant courses. There is a thorough induction training programme for all staff.

Overall, the accommodation and resources meet requirements. The proprietor has recently invested in additional temporary buildings to accommodate, for example, a staffroom, information technology suite and offices. There is good recent provision of new computers and electronic white-boards. There are well-developed plans, with planning consent, for new school buildings.

The proprietor has a very clear overview of the school's financial position. The school does not have a delegated budget but staff may request additional resources as required.

In view of the outcomes achieved by most pupils, the standard of care, support and guidance and the significant very recent developments, the school provides value for money. The school has good prospects for improvement.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Programmes are individually tailored and it is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the learner or parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).'

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Rosemary Lait	Reporting Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
Jeremy Evans	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5
Lucy Pottinger	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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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