



A report on:

Marlowe St David's Education Unit

Date of inspection: February 2014

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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Context

Marlowe St David's School is a small independent school for boys and girls aged seven to eighteen. It is situated in a rural setting in north Pembrokeshire. It was set up in 2000 for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The school is owned and managed by Marlowe Child and Family Services Ltd., which is an organisation that provides residential care, therapy and education services for looked-after children and young people.

At the time of the inspection, there were nine pupils on the roll of the school. Most of the pupils are looked after by local authorities in England and reside in one of the proprietor's four children's homes. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. All of the pupils have English as their first language. None of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The school currently employs one full-time and three part-time teachers. There are two classes, and pupils are grouped according to age and ability. Pupils receive regular support from an assistant psychologist and a looked-after children's (LAC) nurse.

It is not possible to compare the school's performance with national averages, as there is no benchmark data available. Pupils' attainment and achievement are judged on an individual pupil basis.

The current headteacher has been in post since February 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

Performance at Marlowe St David's School is adequate because:

- many pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning;
- nearly all pupils behave well most of the time;
- all pupils feel safe at school;
- relationships between staff and pupils are very good;
- the school provides very good levels of care; and
- the school makes very effective use of specialist staff to support the needs of the pupils.

However:

- a minority of pupils do not engage well enough in their learning and do not make enough progress;
- a minority of pupils miss too much school and frequently arrive late;
- learning support assistants do not always help pupils to learn to work independently; and
- the use of data to track pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning is at an early stage.

Prospects for improvement

The school has adequate prospects for improvement because:

- the headteacher provides effective leadership for the day-to-day running of the school;
- since her appointment, the headteacher and proprietors have placed a clear focus on supporting the emotional needs of the pupils, and this has resulted in improved behaviour;
- leaders communicate their vision for the school effectively to staff and other stakeholders; and
- the school works very well with a range of partners to extend learning opportunities and support the wellbeing of pupils.

However:

- strategic planning does not focus enough on raising pupils' standards;
- the school does not prioritise areas for development or allocate resources effectively enough in order to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress; and
- the school does not carry out formal performance management to identify areas for staff development and provide support.

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 meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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

- R1 Ensure that the school development plan clearly prioritises areas for development, and that resources are allocated to enable priorities to be delivered in a timely way
- R2 Establish robust performance management for all staff
- R3 Use data effectively to track pupil progress and inform planning
- R4 Ensure that all pupils improve their attendance and punctuality over time
- R5 Ensure that support staff encourage pupils to work independently and develop their skills

What happens next?

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 at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

All pupils at the school have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A majority of pupils make appropriate progress in line with their individual abilities and needs. They achieve many of the targets identified in their individual education plans. However, a minority of pupils do not engage well enough in their learning and, as a result, do not make enough progress.

Over the last three years, two thirds of school leavers have achieved one or more qualifications, including entry level mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and food studies, and a level 1 qualification in customer care. However, a minority leave with no qualifications. Last year, a few key stage 3 pupils achieved a GCSE pass in mathematics.

All pupils communicate confidently with staff and visitors to the school. With very few exceptions, pupils are polite and use appropriate language. Most pupils develop the communication skills they need to work with and relate well to their peers. Nearly all pupils contribute to class discussions confidently.

Most pupils develop the ability to work independently. For example, they use their initiative to check words in a dictionary or find out information from the internet. However, at times pupils rely too much on support staff to help them with their work.

Nearly all pupils listen well most of the time. They follow instructions carefully and ask appropriate questions. They demonstrate a good understanding of the topics that they study and are able to recall information that they have learned in previous lessons. Many pupils make effective use of subject specific vocabulary, for example in science and physical education (PE) lessons.

More able pupils have well-developed reading skills. These pupils read aloud confidently and fluently, using correct intonation. They are able to summarise what they have read and express opinions about the text. Less able pupils read short pieces of work accurately, with varying amounts of support. A few pupils are reluctant to read aloud but gain in confidence over time.

A majority of pupils develop their writing skills in line with their ability. They use correct spelling and punctuation, and present their work neatly. A very few more able pupils produce good quality pieces of creative and extended writing. They write effectively in different styles, for example when analysing a text or writing a story. However, a minority of pupils rarely write at length. They do not take enough care over their written work and do not correct basic mistakes.

A majority of pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy skills during mathematics lessons. For example, older pupils develop appropriate use of the calculator and acquire a range of data handling skills. Younger pupils learn to use a

ruler and protractor. They use these skills effectively in other subjects, for example food technology and science. They apply the skills they have learnt in real life situations, for example working out the cost of ingredients for a Chinese meal and calculating the amount of cement for the footings of a pond.

All pupils develop their ICT skills well. They use these skills regularly across the curriculum, for example producing presentations, leaflets and posters and researching information on the internet. They use ICT effectively to create movies which they show to their peers. Older pupils use ICT effectively to redraft their work.

No pupils moved on successfully to further education, employment or training last year. However, one pupil re-integrated successfully into a local mainstream secondary school. This is a notable achievement.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Many pupils attend the school regularly and arrive punctually in the morning. However, a minority of pupils arrive late frequently and miss too much school.

Many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. They pay good attention in lessons and complete their work successfully. When they are anxious, they manage to control their feelings and concentrate on their work. However, a minority of pupils do not attend all lessons and are reluctant to take part in planned activities.

Nearly all pupils behave well most of the time. When they display challenging behaviour, staff manage it well and pupils settle down again promptly. However, on occasions, a few pupils make it difficult for others to concentrate on their work.

All pupils feel safe at school. Nearly all pupils feel that the school deals well with bullying. They all know whom to talk to if they have a problem or concern.

All pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthy food. All pupils take part in regular physical activities, for example swimming, football and fitness. They improve their social skills and learn to interact appropriately with members of the wider community through regular visits to the local leisure centre.

All pupils have regular opportunities to express opinions and take part in making decisions through the monthly school council meetings. For example, pupils have been involved in decisions regarding project work and sports equipment for the school. Pupils develop important skills through chairing these meetings and taking the minutes.

A few pupils learn to take responsibility for specific projects, for example developing the garden area.

Older pupils achieve valuable experience of the world of work through work experience placements at a local café, a farm and a construction company.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a wide variety of learning opportunities appropriate to pupils' needs, abilities and previous educational experiences. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

All pupils have the opportunity to obtain qualifications appropriate to their ability and interests. These include Agored Cymru units and vocational qualifications in land based technology, customer care and small animal care with local training providers. The school offers Entry Level, Pathways and GCSE courses in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, ICT, food technology and religious studies.

The school makes good use of the local community and surrounding coastal environment to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Pupils participate in physical education at a local leisure centre and the local military base. They undertake conservation and environmental work at local castles, beaches, caves and rivers.

All Year 11 pupils have suitable opportunities to take part in work experience placements.

Lesson plans and schemes of work place an appropriate focus on developing pupils' skills. Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their communication, ICT and thinking skills in lessons. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The school encourages pupils' interest in Welsh culture and language, through visits to local places of interest and in classroom displays.

The school has achieved the Eco Schools Bronze award and pupils have good opportunities to develop their understanding of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. These include activities such as composting, beachcombing and developing the school gardens to grow fresh produce.

Teaching: Adequate

Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. When pupils display challenging behaviour, staff work together effectively to make sure that pupils remain engaged in learning activities.

Where teaching is good, planning is detailed and provides clear learning objectives that are shared with and understood by pupils. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the needs and abilities of individual pupils, and prepare appropriate and challenging tasks. Teachers use a wide range of strategies and resources to make activities interesting.

In a majority of lessons, learning support is focused and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. However, in a minority of lessons, learning support assistants provide too much help and do not give pupils enough opportunities to improve their skills.

Teachers and support staff give pupils helpful oral feedback, including advice on how to improve their work. However, the frequency of marking is inconsistent across subjects. Written feedback does not always give pupils advice about what and how to improve. There are limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and others' learning.

The school carries out a baseline assessment of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills when they join the school. However, it does not have effective systems in place for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. It does not use performance data well enough to inform planning.

Parents and carers are kept well informed of their child's progress via termly reports. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to contribute to these reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides very good levels of care and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This supports an ethos of pupils taking responsibility for managing their emotions and responses. Staff act as good role models and they offer appropriate support and guidance.

The school promotes pupils' physical health effectively through regular PE lessons, which include health-related exercise and swimming. Pupils learn about substance misuse, healthy lifestyles and bullying through a comprehensive personal and social education (PSE) curriculum. Pupils use the 'worries box' to raise concerns. This enables staff to support pupils who are anxious.

The school makes very effective use of specialist staff to support the needs of the pupils. A LAC nurse delivers regular sex and relationships education. The community police officer delivers relevant programmes such as e-safety, substance misuse, antisocial behaviour and community safety. Careers Wales provides appropriate advice and support.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, it places a focus on developing their sense of honesty and fairness. This helps pupils learn to relate positively to others.

A particularly strong feature is the support given by the assistant psychologist, who assesses all pupils on entry and delivers tailored programmes including sexualised behaviour, anxiety, anger management and self-harm. She provides high quality training and advice to staff on relevant topics such as attachment disorder, psychiatric disorder and behaviour support.

Staff work together well to produce pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) which are monitored and reviewed regularly. However, IEPs are not always specific or measurable enough and do not always inform pupils well enough of areas they need to improve.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a highly inclusive ethos and provides a calm, supportive environment that helps pupils to learn. Staff promote tolerance and understanding very effectively. This has resulted in positive relationships between pupils and staff and impacts positively on improving pupils' behaviour.

All pupils have equal access to a curriculum that is tailored to meet individual needs. Opportunities to promote and celebrate diversity are evident in PSE and religious studies.

Classrooms are of appropriate size and are well resourced, featuring displays of pupil work that are current and relevant. There are specialist rooms for art, food technology and ICT. Pupils have helped to develop the outside garden area.

Opportunities for practical physical education are limited on the school premises, but the school makes good use of facilities at a local community leisure centre and the nearby army base. Extensive use of the local national park enriches pupils' learning well.

The school building and grounds are well maintained and pupils display a sense of pride in their surroundings.

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

The headteacher provides effective leadership for the day-to-day running of the school. She meets with teaching staff at the start of each day to ensure that short term planning is appropriate for the needs of all the pupils. Staff work very well together to support the emotional and behavioural needs of the pupils. However, the strategic direction provided by leaders does not focus clearly enough on raising standards.

Leaders communicate their vision for the school through a comprehensive set of policy documents and have created an ethos in which pupils feel safe, improve their behaviour and build good relationships with staff.

Roles and responsibilities within the school are clearly defined. Teachers monitor and review planning and policy documents for their allocated curriculum areas appropriately and work together well to develop whole school initiatives such as promoting learner voice.

The headteacher provides useful support for staff at monthly meetings. She carries out regular lesson observations that focus on behaviour management and the quality of relationships between staff and pupils. However, these observations do not have a strong enough focus on pupils' progress and achievement. The school does not have a formal system of performance management.

The proprietors and headteacher liaise regularly to discuss and plan the strategic direction of the school. They have an agreed understanding of the ethos and values of the school. However, the proprietors do not monitor how the school performs well enough. They do not challenge and hold the school to account appropriately for the standards pupils achieve.

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

Improving quality: Adequate

The new headteacher is beginning to establish a suitable system of self-evaluation. This draws effectively on evidence from working groups that evaluate the impact of whole school initiatives, for example the healthy schools' programme. The school routinely gathers the views of pupils through an active school council. However, the self-evaluation report does not focus well enough on pupils' outcomes.

During the past year, the school has placed a clear focus on developing and implementing appropriate strategies to improve pupils' engagement in learning and their standards of behaviour. This has had a positive impact for most pupils.

Leaders and managers use the self-evaluation process to identify targets for improvement that are included in the school development plan. However, the plan does not prioritise these targets and timescales are too long. In addition, managers have not identified resource implications to ensure their timely and effective implementation. As a result, the school has not addressed a few important areas for development, for example the introduction of performance management.

The school has made appropriate progress in addressing many of the recommendations of previous inspections. For example, it has increased the range of qualifications available to pupils and now provides regular opportunities for pupils to use ICT in the classroom. However, the school has been slow to address other recommendations. For example, it has made little progress in improving its use of data to inform future planning and provision.

Partnership working: Good

The school works very well with a wide range of partners including placing authorities, staff from the children's homes and the assistant psychologist. This helps the school to provide well for pupils' specific social and emotional needs and has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Staff have established valuable links with local training providers, which give individual pupils relevant work experience opportunities and prepare them well for the world of work. These include placements at the local café, a farm and a beauty salon.

The school has built useful partnerships with local mainstream schools, which provide teachers with access to useful peer support and advice. This has supported teachers to plan effectively for the development of literacy and ICT skills across the

curriculum. It has also improved the transition planning process for pupils who are re-integrating into mainstream schools.

Effective joint planning between staff from the school and the local sports centre has enabled most pupils to use the sports facilities at the local sports centre with growing confidence and independence. This has widened the range of physical activities available to the pupils and has helped the school to promote healthy lifestyles effectively.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has an appropriate range of experienced teachers who are deployed effectively and have the subject knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum and meet the individual needs of the pupils. However, performance management processes are under-developed and, as a result, leaders and managers do not identify the development needs of staff well enough.

The headteacher manages existing resources well. There are effective processes in place for reviewing the cost of out-of-school activities, for example the use of the local sports centre and outdoor education facilities. However, the shortcomings in strategic planning mean that the procedures to ensure that resources are allocated to key priorities are not developed well enough.

The accommodation is suitably maintained and supports the delivery of the curriculum well. Pupils have good access to a suitable range of learning resources.

In view of the adequate standards achieved by the pupils and their positive sense of wellbeing, the school provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Secondary Questionnaire (Overall)

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Primary Questionnaire (Overall)

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Caroline Rees	Reporting Inspector
Anthony Mulcahy	Team Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Team Inspector
Jeremy Evans	Peer Inspector
Jo Thomas	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, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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.