



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 Coryton School

Date of inspection: February 2013

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:

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Context

Ty Coryton provides a specialist integrated day and residential service for children and young people between the ages of eight and 19 years who have a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition. Residents may attend Ty Coryton school or other educational provision in the locality.

The school is accommodated in a large mansion house on the outskirts of the Cardiff suburb of Whitchurch. Eleven pupils are resident in the Ty Coryton children's home that has separate purpose-built accommodation on-site.

School placements are flexible and include day, weekly and term-time options. There are currently 22 pupils on roll, most of whom are boys. Almost all pupils are in Years 8 to 13. Almost all current pupils are placed by authorities in Wales.

All pupils have a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition and have a statement of special educational needs. The pupils generally have a high level of need with associated behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All pupils communicate through the medium of English. No pupils have Welsh as their home language. A few pupils have little or no verbal communication skill.

The proprietor is a limited company that provides a range of specialist mental health services across South Wales. Its services include two schools and a specialist college for learners with autistic spectrum conditions.

Ty Coryton aims to provide education and care appropriate to the needs of the children within a safe and caring environment.

The school was registered by the National Assembly for Wales as an independent school in April 2008. This is Estyn's first full inspection of the school.

Summary

| | |
|---|-------------|
| The school's current performance | Good |
| The school's prospects for improvement | Good |

Current performance

Ty Coryton is a good school because:

- all pupils make good progress over time;
- pupils enjoy school and generally behave well;
- the curriculum provides a broad and appropriate range of activity that is well-suited to pupils' needs;
- teachers plan and deliver lessons well;
- support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and wellbeing;
- staff manage pupils' behaviour well; and
- the proprietor ensures that pupils have access to a wide range of appropriate specialist support services.

Prospects for improvement

There are good prospects for improvement because:

- the principal gives clear strategic direction to the school;
- leaders have managed change well during the last year;
- staff have a strong commitment to school improvement;
- the school carries out thorough self-evaluation that links well to its plans for improvement; and
- resources are managed effectively.

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 pupils have opportunities to gain qualifications in accredited courses
- R2 Further refine assessment procedures to take more account of the small steps in all pupils' progress and provide more information about more able pupils' progress, so as to help teachers plan
- R3 Extend opportunities for all staff to observe and share good practice

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Across the school, pupils achieve good standards in relation to their learning needs. Due to their complex needs, pupils make very small steps of progress. All pupils make good progress in meeting their individual targets.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that these pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in their overall performance.

All pupils make very good progress with their communication skills. They listen well, and follow instructions. The more able pupils use a good range of vocabulary to express their opinions. Those who use signing and symbols make very good use of picture exchange communication to say how they feel and to make choices, for example what they want to eat in the café.

All pupils make good progress with their literacy skills. The more able pupils read and understand a range of texts. Less able pupils learn to identify basic words and phrases.

More able pupils show good extended writing skills, for example to produce articles for the school magazine. They use a good range of vocabulary and express themselves well. Others develop their skills appropriately in more basic activities such as making shopping lists.

Almost all pupils make good progress with their numeracy skills, and those who are more able apply these well in situations across the school. These include counting money and weighing ingredients in the kitchen.

All pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well, in line with their ability. A few pupils use the internet to carry out research, and produce work on the computer. Others pupils use ICT to match words and pictures, or to make choices.

All pupils learn basic Welsh vocabulary, and gain knowledge of Welsh culture for example learning how to make 'cawl.'

Pupils are working towards a range of accredited qualifications, including AQA, Agored Cymru and ASDAN. Ten pupils are currently working towards their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. However, the school has only recently introduced these courses, and pupils have not yet achieved accredited qualifications.

Where appropriate, pupils take part successfully in work experience. Opportunities include dog walking and looking after animals at a local farm.

All pupils develop the skills they need to live more independently. These include preparing meals, washing and dressing. Older pupils develop skills which help them to prepare for adult life and for moving on to new settings, for example college.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils say they feel safe in school. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and grow in confidence. Most pupils engage well in tasks and enjoy their learning. Overall, they behave well. Where pupils have difficulty managing their behaviour, staff help them to understand their feelings, manage their anger and regain control. As a result, pupils improve their behaviour over time.

Pupils begin to understand how to keep themselves safe in the community. They have an understanding of important issues that may impact on their lives, including healthy living, relationships and crime. Most pupils enjoy participating in a variety of physical exercise activities.

Pupils who do not use language are fully involved in school life. They are familiar with the methods of communication, common language and routines that are used consistently across the school. These enable pupils to gain confidence in making their needs known, for example to choose a snack or use the lavatory.

Through the school council, pupils can influence school life. Pupils have introduced a 'worry box', for raising concerns, and named the school café. They have been involved in choosing outdoor play equipment and changing the school menu.

Pupils are prepared appropriately for life and work beyond the school. They are encouraged to use facilities in the local community, such as the swimming pool, library and local supermarket.

All pupils attend school regularly, unless they have medical issues or appointments. There has been one fixed-term exclusion in the last year.

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| Key Question 2: How good is provision? | Good |
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Learning experiences: Good

The school curriculum provides pupils with appropriate experience in the seven areas of learning as required by the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. The curriculum is loosely based around the subjects of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work are tailored well to meet pupils' individual learning needs. Planning for this year includes suitable opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications in accredited courses.

Pupils are grouped in five small classes according to their age and ability. A few pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration and there are appropriate arrangements for individuals to work away from their peers if they need to.

There is a good focus on developing pupils' communication, numeracy and ICT skills. The strong emphasis on picture exchange and signing systems encourages pupils' independence. Teachers develop detailed long and short term plans. These include good opportunities for more able pupils to develop reading and writing skills.

At the start of every day, across the school, staff deliver the same well-planned introductory key skills lesson to each class. These lessons are very effective. The approach is consistent so that pupils become familiar with language and routines that help them settle well into the pattern of the day.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to make off-site visits, for example to a nature reserve and sports facilities. Regular planned shopping trips help pupils to develop their independent living skills.

The school makes good provision for pupils to learn the Welsh language and encourages pupils' interest in the culture of Wales. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about the wider world and value their environment.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons carefully, and in most lessons make sure that learning activities match the individual needs of the pupils. They use a good range of appropriate teaching strategies and resources, including ICT.

Teachers and support staff have high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour. They work very well together to support the pupils' learning and to help them remain on task. On the occasions when pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour, staff follow clear procedures and manage the behaviour well.

Planned activities focus clearly on developing pupils' skills. In particular, staff make the most of opportunities to help pupils develop their communication skills, through modelling language and encouraging pupils to use signing and picture exchange communication.

Processes for tracking the progress of pupils are generally good. The school carries out a thorough baseline assessment of all pupils on entry. Regular assessment enables staff to plan activities appropriately. The school measures and records pupils' progress carefully through a range of methods, including photographic evidence. Reports to parents are of very high quality, and help parents have a good understanding of the progress their children are making. This is a strength of the school.

However, current systems do not capture effectively enough the very small steps of progress that pupils make. In addition, the assessment of more able pupils does not always provide enough information to help teachers plan challenging work for them.

Pupils' work is marked regularly. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils in evaluating the progress they have made and help them to understand what they need to do to improve. However, this is at an early stage.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective arrangements for pupils' care, support and guidance. Pupils benefit from a very good range of specialist professional services, designed to maintain their health and emotional wellbeing. These include, for example, on-site speech and occupational therapists, psychologists and counselling services. The proprietor also ensures that other services are readily available from within the wider organisation.

Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a variety of activities including assemblies, end of day reflection time and personal and social education lessons. These lessons are planned carefully to help pupils understand their feelings, learn how to keep themselves safe, and think about important issues such as sexual behaviour, drugs and alcohol. Staff ensure that pupils learn to treat other people with respect and that they know what to do if they are being bullied.

There are effective policies and procedures to help pupils improve their behaviour so as to avoid or reduce incidents. Where the behaviour does escalate, staff know how to deal with incidents calmly and efficiently to ensure that everyone remains safe.

Individual education plans are appropriate, realistic and identify pupils' needs effectively. They are evaluated regularly. Pupils, parents and carers are fully involved in annual reviews.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has an inclusive and supportive ethos where all pupils are treated with respect and dignity. Pupils have equal access to all aspects of the school provision. The school considers pupils' needs, abilities and backgrounds carefully to ensure the curriculum is appropriate to each individual. Staff promote diversity and equal opportunities within the curriculum and in wider school activities. They have created a caring ethos which ensures that pupils are supported well.

The school accommodation is of a very high standard and is well cared for and maintained. There are appropriate specialist facilities for physical education and cookery, and generous outdoor space.

Resources are of good quality. They are well matched to pupils' learning needs. These resources are used effectively to enhance the learning experience and participation of the pupils. Provision for ICT is good.

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

The principal and senior managers provide strong and effective strategic direction to the school. There is a clear ethos where the expectation of staff and pupils is high. During the last year, the proprietor and principal recognised that the school needed to make operational changes. Managers set challenging but achievable targets for improvement. However, the change of focus resulted in a few staff leaving the school. The principal managed these changes well to ensure they had minimal impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Staff now have detailed job descriptions and know their individual responsibilities well. They work very effectively together to ensure consistency in their approach. Support staff are valuable team members. There is a strong team spirit in the school.

Managers monitor the work of the school very effectively. They use a range of data to analyse, for example, pupils' standards and behaviour. The recently introduced performance management system includes termly lesson observations and consideration of teachers' planning. Managers know the staff well and provide appropriate support to enable improvement.

There are regular formal staff meetings that focus on sharing information about pupils, raising standards, and ensuring consistency. Meetings are well documented and provide a helpful record of strategies introduced to promote improvement.

The proprietors know the day-to-day workings of the school well and provide appropriate challenge. They visit the school regularly. Managers provide them with weekly reports and the principal meets formally with them regularly to discuss the school's progress. School policies are of good quality. Managers and staff review these regularly.

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

Improving quality: Good

The process of self-evaluation is well-embedded in the school. It involves all the staff and takes good account of the views of parents and pupils. The very detailed current self-evaluation report is based on first-hand evidence. It is an honest document that identifies many appropriate areas for school improvement. The proprietors helped the school to refine the report and recognise the priorities.

The introduction of performance management and lesson observations has had a significant impact in identifying issues for improvement in teaching and learning. These systems also helped staff to develop the consistent approach that is proving effective within and beyond the classroom. Staff value the positive support that they receive through the process.

The self-evaluation report links directly to the areas identified for development in the school improvement plan. These are generally appropriate. However, the school needs to focus more specifically on the key priorities to allow staff time to consolidate the significant changes and good work carried out during the last year.

Within the school, staff have worked well together to plan a major resource project to improve pupils' opportunities for sensory and outdoor learning. The Welsh teacher has benefited from meeting with staff at a local special school to consider strategies for the subject. Managers have useful opportunities to share good practice with the other education services operated by the proprietor.

The school's clear focus on improvement for the last year has had a significant impact on raising standards of teaching and learning.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed valuable partnerships which make an important contribution to the pupils' learning experiences. Links with local businesses provide pupils with a range of interesting opportunities for work experience. Pupils also

access a range of experiences in the local community, for example visits to the shops, library and café. The school has collaborated with these services to ensure that they have an understanding of the needs and behaviours of visiting pupils.

The school benefits from the support and guidance it receives from the proprietor's wider services. These have helped managers to make improvements to the school, for example through the contribution of the training manager. Pupils have a few opportunities to participate in activities with other learners from the wider group, for example through a shared sports day.

The school has started to develop links with a number of special schools as well as a mainstream school. This has enabled one member of staff to improve the teaching of Welsh at the school. However, overall, staff do not have enough opportunities to observe good practice in other schools. The school has also developed useful links with a university, where students of psychology carry out work experience at the school and share knowledge of their subject.

Within the school there are very strong partnerships. All staff work very closely together to support the complex needs of the pupils. Education and care staff, therapists, as well as kitchen staff, all contribute to the good progress that pupils make, for example with communication skills.

The school communicates effectively with parents and involves them in making decisions about their child's education. This includes a home-school diary for day pupils, and transition workshops for parents to discuss their child's future placements. There are very good transition processes in place to support pupils when they leave the school.

Resource management: Good

The school has a clear staffing structure where staff are very well deployed. Overall, teachers have knowledge and understanding that enables them to deliver lessons at an appropriate level to meet their pupils' needs. High quality learning support staff provide very effective support for pupils in class so that activities run smoothly throughout the day. Although there have been significant teaching staff changes during the last year, arrangements are managed well to enable consistency for pupils.

Induction for new staff is thorough and includes training courses in a range of appropriate aspects such as autistic spectrum disorders and safeguarding. Recent training in picture exchange communication and signing have proved particularly effective. In addition, staff have very good opportunities to extend their professional expertise through attendance at a range of professional development courses relevant to their roles.

The accommodation provides an attractive learning environment that is very well resourced. The proprietor allocates funding appropriately to ensure that the school provides good quality resources overall.

The positive outcomes for pupils, good quality provision and secure management ensure that the school provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to the learner questionnaires

Eight pupils responded to the questionnaire. Most of them feel that they are doing well at school, that teachers help them to learn and that they take regular exercise. Many feel that they have the right equipment and that the school helps them to be healthy. A majority of pupils agree that they feel safe in school, know who to talk to if they are worried and who to ask if their work is difficult. A minority of pupils do not feel that other pupils behave well or that the school stops any bullying.

However, a minority of pupils said that they did not know how to answer a few of the questions. These included whether they felt safe or whether the school stops any bullying.

Responses to parent questionnaires

There were too few responses from parents or carers to provide an analysis.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Rosemary Lait | Reporting Inspector |
| Caroline Rees | Team Inspector |
| Gail George | 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, 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. |