



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**  
**Marlowe St David's Education Unit**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

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

## About Marlowe St David's Education Unit

Marlowe St David's Education Unit is an independent special school situated in north Pembrokeshire. The proprietor, Marlowe Child and Family Services Ltd, owns children's homes and schools in England and Wales. The school is registered to admit up to 20 pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school provides education for young people who live in the company's children's homes as well as offering day placements. Many pupils attending the school are placed by Pembrokeshire local authority.

There are 10 pupils on the roll of the school. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. A very few of the pupils are looked after by local authorities in England and reside in one of the proprietor's children's homes. All of the pupils have English as their first language. At the time of the inspection, around a half of pupils on roll are new to the school.

The headteacher joined the school in October 2016.

## Summary

During their time at school, most pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points. Overall, pupils respond appropriately in lessons and make suitable progress in achieving the lesson objectives. Many pupils behave well around the school.

Nearly all staff establish effective working relationships with pupils and set high expectations of their behaviour. Teachers and learning support assistants provide pupils with a caring and understanding environment where they can explore their social, emotional and learning strengths. However, the current curriculum offer at the school does not reflect the ethos and purpose of the provision. It is not tailored well enough to engage pupils with a broad range of needs and abilities.

After a period of considerable instability, the school has secured a permanent headteacher. The headteacher is beginning to have a notable impact on the day-to-day running of the school, the working relationships with external partners and the school environment and ethos. However, the lengthy period of instability and numerous changes in leadership and staffing have limited the overall progress of the school over the last four years, particularly around developing a suitable curriculum and meeting the needs of a changing cohort of pupils.

The school does not meet all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>

## **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 the majority of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that the curriculum policy is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement them effectively. 1(2)
- Ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational needs. 1(2)(b)
- Ensure that the policies enable pupils to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy 1 (2) ( C)
- Ensure that the school provides personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos 1 (2) ( f)
- Ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. 1(3)(d)

### **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 does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Implement the planned changes to the recording of restrictive physical intervention 3(2)(b)

### **The suitability of proprietors and staff**

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that the proprietor has applied for an appropriate disclosure and barring certificate and that the application has been countersigned by the National Assembly for the purposes of Part V of the Police Act 1997 [4(a)(a)]

#### **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 Comply with the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Improve attendance
- R3 Ensure that teaching consistently meets the needs of all pupils
- R4 Review the curriculum offer, especially for older pupils
- R5 Plan effectively for the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum
- R6 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement processes by evaluating all available data

### **What happens next**

Since the school does not meet 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 will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

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

## Main findings

### **Standards: Adequate and needs improvement**

Pupils attending Marlowe St David's Education Unit have a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a history of poor school attendance and a few have severe barriers to education. A few have been out of education for a considerable time.

During their time at school, many pupils make appropriate progress from their individual starting points in line with their needs and ability. A majority of pupils attend the school for around 18 months and during this time most achieve many of the learning targets identified on their individual education plans (IEPs). Overall, most pupils respond appropriately in lessons and make suitable progress in achieving the lesson objectives. Over time, a few more able pupils make sound progress in their learning. Many pupils develop specific aspects of social and behaviour skills well. However, pupils are not able to track their own progress in these areas of their learning as very few know their own specific targets.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance trends of groups over time because of the nature of the pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs. There is no notable difference between the performance of pupils and those who are in the care of their local authority.

In lessons, many pupils recall prior learning and apply this confidently to new areas of learning. Across the school, most pupils listen and develop positive relationships with staff. They pay attention to their teachers and respond well to questions. However, a very few pupils waste valuable time and wander in and out of lessons. Generally, pupils are confident to ask questions and seek clarification when needed. Most pupils speak clearly and use an appropriate range of language for their age and ability. A minority use technical terms with ease and a few use a good range of more advanced language, for example using the word 'accomplishments' in the correct context and explaining its meaning succinctly.

Many pupils read fluently in line with their ability. A few more able and self-assured pupils read out loud with confidence. Pupils of all ages extract information confidently from a range of texts and a few use this information confidently to inform other activities.

Many pupils who engage in writing have appropriate spelling skills and a few use dictionaries with ease. Most pupils write legibly and younger pupils form their letters accurately. A few younger pupils write appropriately in extended sentences and a few older pupils write at length in English lessons using relevant styles and for a range of purposes. When given the opportunity, they use these skills suitably in other subjects such as topic work and science. However a very few older pupils take little pride in their work. In these cases, written tasks are sometimes incomplete.

Around half of pupils develop their numeracy skills suitably. In mathematics lessons, pupils carry out calculations with the four rules of number accurately and use these skills in contexts such as managing money and analysing data from charts and

graphs. Pupils develop their understanding of mathematical terms and use these with confidence. For example, younger pupils talk fluently about learning the concepts of angles and can explain how these are relevant to shapes such as triangles. A few older pupils produce accurate graphs, charts and data displays in science and mathematics lessons. However, only a very few pupils develop their skills in ICT during their time at school.

Overall, pupils make good progress when they engage in outdoor education activities and develop a broad range of thinking and problem solving skills. Examples include learning to tie knots and producing a five point star in sand on a local beach. Older pupils present interesting and high quality works of art.

Over the last three years, a very few pupils left the school with a recognised accreditation.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement**

Most pupils feel safe at the school. They build and maintain positive and nurturing relationships with teachers and learning support assistants. Over time, many pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem well. This helps them to explore and express their feelings during morning community circle time when they prepare for the day ahead and review their personal targets. As a result, most pupils develop important skills such as patience, respect and turn-taking with increasing confidence. A minority of pupils use these skills appropriately during the school day.

Many pupils behave well around the school and a minority of pupils interact confidently with teachers and visitors to the school. They are polite and courteous. A minority of pupils work with their peers effectively and this enhances their learning, progress and social skills.

A majority of pupils carry out their work in lessons diligently and a few pupils enjoy their learning. However, a minority of pupils are too passive in their learning. Generally, pupils enjoy the range of outdoor learning sessions on offer, such as sailing and kayaking. This helps them to build their self-confidence and self-esteem and supports them to achieve their personal targets.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of activities that develop their social interaction and communication skills. For example, fortnightly family lunch sessions bring the whole school together to share in social and community experiences. A majority of pupils take part enthusiastically in regular community focused sessions held at the school, including charitable events and celebrations of different cultures such as Diwali and St David's Day. This helps them develop their social skills and they learn to empathise with others.

Many pupils who attend school regularly develop useful skills and awareness in areas such as fairness, honesty, resilience and tolerance through the school 'character curriculum'. This engaging programme promotes nine areas of social and community skills. Pupils learn to recognise the importance of these skills as part of their lessons and in social time. Younger pupils in particular learn to be patient and this helps them to respect the rights of others. Older pupils develop their resilience and courage through activities such as wall-climbing.

Pupils express their views about their learning and the school through recently introduced pupil questionnaires. However, it is too early to see the impact of these initiatives on whole school curriculum planning.

Many pupils with a poor record of attendance make sound progress in improving their personal attendance when compared to their previous schools. However, overall attendance at the school has declined over the last four terms and current attendance rates, at around 60%, remain too low. In addition, a few pupils on part-time timetables do not make swift enough progress in increasing their attendance.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

Overall, the school offers pupils a curriculum that is suitable with a clear focus on English and mathematics in the mornings and topic work and outdoor education in the afternoons. The current curriculum covers the seven areas of learning and meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. However, the school does not have a well-thought out plan to address the needs, abilities and aspirations of older pupils. This means that the current curriculum offer does not reflect the ethos and purpose of the provision.

Overall, the curriculum offer for younger pupils provides suitably for them to develop their knowledge and understanding through thoughtful and interesting themes such as volcanoes, rainforests and the history of Aztecs. However, the curriculum for older pupils is too narrow and does not offer sufficient opportunities for a variety of accreditation appropriate to their abilities and aspirations. This does not prepare pupils for the next steps in their education or employment.

The strategic planning for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is under-developed. Very few pupils have meaningful skills targets and there are no means for the school to monitor, track and evaluate pupils' progress over time. Although there is a policy for literacy, there is no similar policy for numeracy and ICT. This means that teachers are not able to plan sufficiently for the systematic progression of pupils' skills over time and across the full curriculum.

Teachers across the school do not plan consistently to meet the special educational needs of individual pupils. Although the special educational needs co-ordinator provides useful information about pupils' baseline assessments, teachers do not use this information in their planning or teaching. Generally, pupils' special educational needs are not addressed consistently through targets on their individual education plans. In addition, there is limited planning for specific interventions or therapies to help pupils to address emotional, social and learning needs.

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Nearly all staff establish effective working relationships with pupils and set high expectations of their behaviour. They establish beneficial routines, such as the community circle time in the mornings that focuses well on pupils' wellbeing at the beginning of the day. Learning support assistants work very efficiently with teachers and make an important and effective contribution to pupils' progress.

Staff provide pupils with helpful and positive verbal feedback about their behaviour throughout the day. This helps most pupils to sustain their concentration, remain on task and maintain motivation. However, in a few cases, specific written or verbal feedback does not help pupils understand how to improve their work. This means that in a few instances pupils are unclear about their next steps of learning.

Where teaching is effective, teachers communicate clear learning objectives to pupils and give clear explanations throughout the lesson. As a result, pupils understand what they need to do to be successful. In these lessons, teachers plan interesting lessons that encourage pupils to engage in their learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers make good use of a wide range of teaching approaches and resources such as media clips and class discussions that motivate pupils to participate enthusiastically in their lessons. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully to recall previous learning and to check for understanding.

Where teaching is less successful, the pace of learning is too slow. There is a lack of challenge especially for more able pupils and teachers do not adapt activities well enough to engage pupils. For example, in a few subjects, the over-use of worksheets restricts the amount of extended writing pupils can do and provides limited opportunities for them to practise their skills across the curriculum. In a few lessons, teachers' explanations are too long or unclear. As a result, a few pupils lose interest quickly, leave the classroom often and do not make sufficient progress by the end of the lesson.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement**

Teachers and learning support assistants provide pupils with a caring and understanding environment where they can explore their social, emotional and learning strengths. They have a secure and empathetic understanding of their pupils' day-to-day needs.

The school liaises particularly well with parents and carers on a daily basis. This means that parents often know about their child's achievements before they arrive home. This allows the school, parents and carers to work together effectively to provide consistent approaches to support and rewards.

Very recently, the school has improved links with an appropriate range of external agencies. These include the local community police, the link school nurse and outdoor education providers. As a result, pupils benefit from an increased range of personal support. The school has suitable access to the careers service.

The school promotes positive attitudes towards healthy eating suitably. Staff actively encourage pupils to bring healthy lunches to school. Overall, pupils respond positively to this advice and eat and drink healthily at school.

The school offers pupils appropriate opportunities to explore social and moral themes such as tolerance and respect through the character curriculum and thematic work. However, the strategic planning of a cohesive personal and social education programme is under-developed. This means that teachers cannot plan effectively for the development of many aspects of pupils' personal development. For example, pupils do not have access to sex and personal relationships education.

The school has a clear behaviour policy that focuses well on promoting positive behaviour. This has contributed to developing a calm ethos across the school. Staff use the agreed positive behaviour management strategies consistently and a majority of pupils understand and respond appropriately to these systems. Overall, the number of exclusions is low. The school has suitable systems to tackle absenteeism. These include close multi-agency working, use of individual engagement plans and regular liaison with parents, carers and placing local authorities. However, these strategies are not effective enough in improving the overall attendance or the attendance of a few pupils with complex social and emotional difficulties. Although the school reviews pupils' part-time timetables regularly, there are no secure plans in place to ensure that all pupils attend full-time.

The school has worked hard to develop a tracking tool that enables them to measure pupils' progress against national averages. They have also introduced a range of data collection measures for initiatives such as the character curriculum and attitudes to learning. However, the collated and evaluated information is not used robustly enough to inform pupil targets, teacher planning and self-evaluation.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils generally meet requirements but a very few aspects give some cause for concern. These issues were raised with the school during the inspection.

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

After a period of considerable instability, the school has secured a permanent headteacher since October 2016. The headteacher is having a notable impact on the day-to-day running of the school, the working relationships with external partners and the school environment and ethos. In a relatively short period since her appointment, the headteacher has set a clear vision for the school and is developing realistic plans for the next steps in the school's improvement journey. Very recently, the company has introduced a governance structure to oversee the quality of education and care across sites in Wales and England. Senior managers in the company are beginning to provide suitable support for the headteacher, although their role as a critical friend is at a very early stage of development. However, the lengthy period of instability and numerous changes in leadership and staffing over the last four years have limited the overall progress of the school, particularly around developing a suitable curriculum to meet the needs of a changing cohort of pupils.

The school has a small staff who work together efficiently as a team. The headteacher has recently distributed responsibilities appropriately across the school and deploys staff sensibly according to their skills and interests. Although most of these roles are relatively new to the school, staff carry out their responsibilities with enthusiasm. Communication across the school is now clear and regular and keeps all staff informed of changes. The introduction of daily debrief meetings and Friday 'shout-out' meetings is having a positive impact on staff morale and developing a strong team ethos across the school. There is also an improved working relationship with the attached residential care homes. The residential care workers, who support pupils from the care home during the school day, have a solid understanding of their role in the classroom and engage competently with staff and pupils in lessons.

Arrangements for self-evaluation and planning for improvements are at a very early stage of development. The current self-evaluation report, although descriptive in parts, is an honest evaluation of the school's current performance. The school is beginning to put appropriate processes in place to quality assure a few areas of its work. For example, the school has begun to collect data about attendance, behaviour and pupil performance. However, leaders do not use the available data extensively when evaluating standards, pupil progress over time or the quality of provision. The links between the self-evaluation report and the school development objectives are generally suitable. However, the development plan does not set out clearly enough the training needs of staff or the resources needed.

In response to staff feedback, the school has recently reviewed its arrangements for performance management. The new arrangements include weekly one-to-one meetings with the headteacher that are valued highly by staff. The company provides a suitable range of professional development opportunities for all staff, including a worthwhile induction period. This includes training on important areas such on child protection, attachment and behaviour management as well as the opportunity to observe practice at the school and in the homes. However, there have been no formal observations of teaching during the last 18 months. This means that teachers do not receive feedback on their performance, opportunities to share best practice are missed and leaders are not able to prioritise areas for improvement in teaching well enough. Overall, teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to attend training in key areas of learning, teaching and additional learning needs. In addition, opportunities for all staff to observe effective practice in similar settings are under-developed.

The school does not have a delegated budget. This means that the headteacher is not always able to plan sufficiently for long-term improvement or implement key priorities in the school development plan. The school manages its learning environment successfully and is making worthwhile improvements to the quality of the internal school accommodation. However, it lacks sufficient ICT equipment to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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.

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses 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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