



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

A report on

Bettws Lifehouse

Date of inspection: July 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Bettws Lifehouse

Bettws Lifehouse is an independent day school and is registered to provide education for pupils aged seven to nineteen years. Currently, the school is only providing education for younger pupils as older pupils are generally educated in an independent school in England, which is part of the wider Lifehouse provision. Pupils have a range of complex needs including behavioural, social, emotional difficulties and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).

All pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan.

The school's last monitoring visit was in February 2022. The headteacher of the school has been in position since February 2020 and is supported by a team of seven teachers and fourteen teaching assistants. The executive headteacher is one of the proprietors and has been in post since the school opened.

Main findings

Strengths

Bettws Lifehouse continues to be a consistently strong provider where pupil well-being securely underpins the curriculum offer. The highly skilled and dedicated staff team, alongside the personalised curriculum, support pupils well to engage in learning and make strong progress from their starting points.

Leaders at all levels have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all members of the team. As a result, roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and there is a strong ethos of teamwork across the school.

Staff at the school know and understand their pupils individual needs well. They promote a strong, inclusive approach, which enables them to develop positive working relationships with pupils. Across the school, pupils engage enthusiastically and enjoy their learning experiences. Over time, they develop trust in staff and show increasing perseverance in their learning.

Since the last visit, the outdoor learning provision has been further improved. This offers a wide range of valuable learning opportunities, which positively impact on pupils' learning and well-being. Examples include the school garden, where pupils grow a range of produce to use in their cooking lessons, and the wood school, which offers pupils the freedom and creativity to explore the local environment.

Areas for development

Since the last visit, Bettws Lifehouse has opened a new school in Shrewsbury to cater for pupils aged five to eighteen years old. Currently, older secondary-aged pupils from Bettws Lifehouse are predominantly placed in this school. As a result, specialist teachers who previously offered careers advice and guidance are no longer accessible to the pupils on the lower school site. The school has recently appointed a member of staff to oversee this area of the curriculum. However, this is in the early stages of development.

Leaders are reviewing the current assessment frameworks across the school and are in the process of aligning the Lifehouse curriculum with the Curriculum for Wales. The school is in the early stages of aligning the current assessment framework for health and well-being with the Curriculum for Wales.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Continue to strengthen the careers advice and guidance for younger pupils
- R2 Continue to review the current assessment framework within the health and well-being area of learning

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1 Consistently implement strategies to improve pupils' interactions with their peers

Since the last annual monitoring visit, leaders and staff have made strong progress to address this recommendation. A wide range of well-planned strategies to improve pupil interactions with their peers are securely in place throughout the week.

Staff plan activities to encourage paired and small group working where appropriate. For example, den building in the woods and collaborative story writing exercises. Over time, opportunities for these activities have been developed and are inclusive of the pupils' suggestions.

During both lessons on-site and the purposeful off-site learning activities, staff effectively model strategies to encourage pupils to progressively build their interaction skills with their peers. As a result, during lesson observations and learning walks there is a significant increase in the number of pupils observed working with each other throughout the school day.

R2 Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to improve pupils' engagement with peers

Since the last visit, leaders have ensured that team meetings have had a sound focus on the progress pupils have been making in their ability to engage with their peers.

Leaders and staff continue to evaluate the impact of the new group work initiatives and adapt and refine practice to support all pupils. This includes a purposeful focus on the success of individual group activities as well the progress of individuals against their personal learning goals. The school has made strong progress with this recommendation.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Standard 2: The spiritual, moral, and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 3.

Standard 4: The suitability of proprietors and staff

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 4.

Standard 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 5.

Standard 6: The provision of information

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendation regarding continued registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government may wish to have regard to the following recommendation:

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Inspectors' judgements on this limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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