



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

A report on

Headlands School

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Headlands School

Headlands School is an independent school, situated in the residential area of Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is part of the Action for Children charity group.

The school provides residential and day placements for pupils aged 7 to 19 years with social, emotional and associated complex needs. All pupils have a wide range of additional learning needs including attachment disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity, autistic spectrum conditions, and other various complex needs related to trauma. Nearly all pupils have either a statement of special educational need (SEN), an Individual Development Plan (IDP) or equivalent.

A minority of pupils have child looked-after (CLA) status. The school educates 80 pupils from 7-19 years of age. Currently, there are 17 residential pupils who attend the school and the remaining 63 pupils are day pupils. Nearly all pupils come from Welsh local authorities, with a very few from English local authorities.

The school's aim is to develop young people's sense of self, through engaging in a wide range of purposeful and educative activities.

The principal has been in post since 2009. The last full inspection by Estyn was in April 2019.

Main findings

Strengths

Headlands school is an inclusive community where pupils and staff develop strong relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. Pupils settle quickly when they join the school and value an individualised approach to learning. As a result, nearly all pupils engage positively with lessons and make strong progress during their time at the school.

The school provides an extensive range of engaging learning experiences, supported by high-quality facilities. For example, pupils recently interviewed a Welsh Government minister on the school radio station. These activities are well matched to pupils' interests. Most pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning and take pride in their work.

Teachers provide well-planned learning experiences with a clear purpose. For example, during a recent visit to Edinburgh, pupils developed important self-management skills when using national transport networks. Further, teachers skilfully plan for the progression of a range of important skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and make positive progress in areas such as independence.

Staff have high expectations of pupils in all areas of their learning and personal development. For example, pupils achieve relevant qualifications and accreditations. Where pupils face challenges, staff respond swiftly to provide highly effective support to enable them to self-regulate, express their feelings, and return to their learning successfully.

The school prepares pupils extremely well for their future lives. Most pupils relish the opportunity to complete a range of work experience, for example in the school shop, café or bicycle repair centre. The school supplements pupil experiences with guidance from external professionals. This provides a beneficial insight into the world of work.

Leaders have a highly accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They collaborate effectively with pupils, staff and the wider school community to bring about improvements, for example recently using feedback from a pupil-led research project to strengthen transition arrangements. Leaders are visible around the school on a day-to-day basis, engage actively in the school's work and have a strong understanding of the needs and interests of pupils.

Areas for development

The school is currently redesigning their curriculum offer through a thorough process of joint working and professional enquiry, for example with the addition of karate, bee keeping and animal care.

This initiative is strengthening the curriculum offer at the school. However, it is in the early stages of implementation.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Consolidate new approaches to the curriculum design across the school

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Evaluate the impact of pupil therapeutic intervention plans

Since the last visit, the school has made strong progress towards meeting this recommendation.

Nearly all staff make effective use of pupil therapeutic intervention plans to provide consistent support for pupils.

Leaders now evaluate the impact of these plans in a number of beneficial ways, for example through lesson observations, analysis of behavioural patterns and using feedback from pupils and parents. Further, the wider staff team provide helpful feedback to leaders on the impact on pupils' behaviour, engagement and outcomes.

As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of these plans and respond sensitively and promptly where required.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 1.

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

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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