



*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**  
**Headlands School**

**Date of inspection: October 2012**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	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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**Publication date: 27 December 2012**

## Context

Headlands School is an independent special school, situated in a residential area of Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is part of the Action for Children charity. The school provides day and residential placements for pupils with very challenging behaviour and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

At the time of the inspection the school educated 48 pupils, 42 boys and six girls, aged between eight and 19 years. Of these, five pupils were in key stage 2, 19 pupils in key stage 3, 10 pupils in key stage 4 and 14 pupils were post-16.

Pupils come from Welsh and English authorities and 12 pupils have termly residential places. Forty-seven pupils have a statement of educational needs and 15 pupils have 'looked-after child' (LAC) status. All pupils have additional learning needs, which include attention deficit hyperactivity disorders and autistic spectrum disorders.

English is the predominant language of nearly all pupils. One pupil speaks Welsh as his first language at home. The school aims to provide a nurturing environment and a broad and balanced curriculum to meet the individual learning and behavioural needs of the pupils.

The school's overall objective is to help pupils achieve to the maximum of their potential and receive the preparation that they need for moving on to the next stage in their lives.

Estyn inspects the special educational provision at the school annually as part of its monitoring programme. The last full inspection was in November 2007. The present headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### Current performance

Headlands is a good school because:

- leaders have high expectations and ensure that the school functions effectively;
- pupils achieve good standards in their learning and develop the social and communication skills that they need;
- all pupils gain a wide range of appropriate qualifications;
- the school has effective systems for tracking, recording and analysing information about pupils' progress;
- teaching is good and work is planned very carefully to meet the needs of all pupils;
- pupils behave and attend well;
- pupils have good care, support and guidance;
- leaders monitor staff performance carefully; and
- there is very strong commitment to continuous school improvement.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Headlands School are excellent because:

- the headteacher provides clear, strategic leadership and has created a culture of effective shared responsibility;
- the leadership teams have a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff;
- self-evaluation is well embedded and leaders focus very successfully on school improvement;
- staff work skilfully as a team and have high expectations of the pupils;
- leaders use performance management and appraisal procedures effectively to identify whole-school training and development needs; and
- the school manages its resources well and provides value for money.

## **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 Address the minority of pupils' perceptions that staff do not always intervene quickly enough when behaviour is likely to escalate into bullying;
- R2 ensure that, where teaching is excellent, teachers share their good practice across the school;
- R3 make sure that marking always helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work;
- R4 ensure that all work sheets are age appropriate;
- R5 strengthen the involvement of the governing body in the self-evaluation process;  
and
- R6 further develop the school improvement plan as a detailed and comprehensive document.

### What happens next?

Estyn advises the school to amend its current development plan to show what action it will take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate the plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

All learners have difficulties in managing their behaviour and have often missed a great deal of school, and there is great variation in their learning ability. Pupils almost always join Headlands because previous placements have been unable to meet their needs. In this context, it is not possible to compare the school's performance with national averages, as there is no benchmark data available. Pupils' attainment and achievement have to be judged on an individual pupil basis.

Due to the good support and encouragement that pupils receive from staff, all pupils make good progress compared with their previous attainment. They become more responsible, learn to manage their behaviour and improve how they relate to others. Pupils recognise and value this significant achievement.

All pupils gain a wide range of qualifications appropriate to their abilities. These include GCSE, WJEC entry level, Essential Skills Wales, Open College Network level 1, BTEC level 2, Advanced Supplementary (AS) level and the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. This year, pupils at key stages 4 and 5 gained 61 GCSEs and 65 entry level awards. This emphasis on examinations and level of attainment in an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is sector-leading. Over the last three years, all leavers moved on to further education, training or employment.

Pupils understand the need to develop their skills. Many of them, on entry to the school, have poor basic skills and/or speech, language and communication difficulties. The targeted support that they receive from staff enables them to make good progress over time.

Nearly all pupils develop and improve their reading and writing skills. They use these skills to research and complete written tasks, projects and presentations, read aloud in class and read for pleasure. They use their developing numeracy skills in a range of activities across the curriculum, for example measuring, weighing and keeping to time.

Pupils make good progress in developing their social and communication skills and gain the skills that they need to move on to further learning or employment. For example, they learn to listen carefully, follow instructions, take turns and co-operate with staff and each other.

Pupils learn to assess their performance and identify where they need to make improvements. Older, more able pupils are able to work independently. They complete homework and revision exercises to support their examination work. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well to draft and redraft their work and to research the internet, and post-16 pupils prepare high quality presentations on their chosen projects.

Older pupils take part and enjoy a wide range of vocational opportunities. These include BTEC level 1 and level 2 in Construction, Hair and Beauty and Electrical Engineering and Open College Network Awards in Animation and Sequence Design and Film-making Techniques at the local college.

Pupils gain a clear understanding of the world of work. They take part in good quality work placements in retail, leisure facilities, construction and the media.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Pupils and staff show respect for one another. Pupils enjoy attending school and nearly all behave well in class and around the school.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living options. They engage in a range of physical activities, both in school and through extra-curricular activities. These include participating in karate, rugby and dance. Pupils benefit from high quality sex and relationship education. This includes opportunities to discuss their emotions and reflect on choices they may make in the future and their consequences.

There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years. Many pupils feel safe in school, and this is confirmed by parents. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and what to do when there are issues. Although parents do not see bullying as a problem, a minority of pupils perceive that where there are issues teachers do not always intervene quickly enough to prevent escalation.

The level of pupil attendance has increased over the past three years and is currently 89%. Although this is below the national average for maintained schools, for many pupils this is a marked improvement on their attendance in their previous schools. In a few cases, there has been a significant increase in the level of individual attendance.

The school council plays an active role in decision-making affecting school life, for example improving play facilities and having an input into the skills curriculum. The peer mentoring scheme has proved invaluable for pupils. As a result, pupils have learned the importance of confidentiality and are more confident in providing support to other pupils. This increased level of responsibility has built trust between pupils and staff and improved the self-esteem of the pupil mentors.

Pupils benefit from a valuable range of opportunities in the community and in work placements, which widen their horizons and increase their confidence. These include volunteering at the local dog pound, working at a fishmonger and following courses in mainstream schools and a local college. As a result of these experiences, pupils become more confident and develop a sense of worth, which prepares them well for future learning experiences.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in all key stages appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities. Pupils have good access to a range of activities that are designed to motivate them and successfully promote their wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem.



The outdoor curriculum includes activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, team sports and educational visits to places of local interest. This gives pupils the opportunity to experience new challenges and gain valuable skills.

Across the school, pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, they regularly evaluate their work, review their own targets and assess each other's work.

Pupils learn about the world of work and undertake work experience in a variety of settings such as leisure facilities and in retail.

The school makes good use of local mainstream schools and colleges to widen the curriculum for all pupils. As a result, pupils can access Advanced Supplementary (AS) level mathematics and taster courses in a wide range of vocational subjects in local schools and colleges.

There is an appropriate emphasis on developing skills in communication, numeracy, thinking and ICT across all subjects and all key stages. The planning cycle to support skill development is very effective and the school carefully monitors its impact on learning. The system to assess and evaluate pupils' progress in skills is a strength of the school.

Recycling schemes encourage pupils to be aware of environmental issues. There are a range of opportunities across the curriculum to learn about sustainable development.

### **Teaching: Good**

All teachers and teaching assistants understand their pupils well and skilfully manage their behaviour. They are particularly good at keeping pupils on task when they become distracted. When pupils do become angry and lose self-control, teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to resolve issues and make sure that pupils return to work quickly.

Teachers plan lessons very carefully to take account of pupils' needs and abilities. They provide good opportunities for progression and extension activities for more able pupils. However, on occasion, worksheets for less able learners are not age appropriate. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on examinations and prepare all pupils very well throughout their courses. They give pupils helpful feedback about their performance and make sure that they understand how to improve their grades.

They use a wide range of suitable resources including ICT and set a brisk pace with a range of activities designed to hold pupils' interests. Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations and give pupils the encouragement and support that they need to attempt new tasks.

Teachers pay very good attention to developing pupils' skills. They use lesson objectives and plenaries well to make sure that pupils understand exactly which skills they will use and to evaluate how successfully they have used them.

The school has comprehensive systems for recording, tracking and analysing information about pupils' progress. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development is assessed on their entry to the school. This information informs teachers' planning.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, across the school, comments do not always give pupils enough information about how they can improve their performance.

Teachers and teaching assistants regularly contact parents to inform them about pupils' progress and behaviour.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school's wellbeing curriculum clearly sets out the different aspects of provision within the school. The school has successfully implemented a range of systems and procedures to support pupils. Examples include peer mentoring and the student assistance programme. These programmes help pupils to gain a better understanding of issues that may concern them. They are carefully designed to reduce pupil anxiety and address issues in order to overcome barriers to their learning.

The school has developed strong links with external agencies and these are effective in providing care, support and guidance to all pupils. Pupils have access to independent advocacy services, careers guidance and, where appropriate, the services of a clinical psychologist.

The personal and social education curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to gain a better understanding of how to relate to the world and keep themselves safe. Topics include sex education, substance misuse and e-safety. The school makes good use of the police liaison officer. She supports pupils in extra-curricular activities and delivers aspects of the personal and social education curriculum such as domestic violence and racism. This valuable work has helped pupils to have a more positive view of the police and gain an understanding of what behaviour is acceptable within the community.

Individual education plans (IEPs) identify appropriate learning targets which are clearly understood by pupils. They have good opportunities to contribute to setting their targets and reflecting on their learning. These targets are reviewed on a regular basis.

The school complies with its statutory duties with regards to pupils with statements of special educational needs and ensures that the additional learning needs of pupils are met.

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

## **Learning environment: Good**

All staff have created an inclusive and supportive school ethos in which pupils can thrive. Pupils have access to a curriculum that is appropriate to their individual learning and personal needs. Pupils' views are sought, valued and acted upon.

The school provides a welcoming environment, which is well resourced to meet the learning needs of all pupils. The school and the local community make good use of the outdoor areas, especially the play equipment, all-weather pitch and bike track.

Pupils are valued and the school pays good attention to keeping pupils safe and free from bullying. Staff and peer mentors are good role models.

There are clear policies in relation to discrimination and equality. The school is well maintained and classrooms are well resourced.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Leadership: Excellent**

The headteacher has established a clear, strategic vision for the school, which is shared by all staff. He provides inspirational leadership and has high expectations of staff and pupils. Members of the senior management team, leadership teams and heads of key stages have established a strong sense of purpose and values within the school and are effectively moving the school forward.

There is a clear leadership structure. The leadership teams include the learning support team, the pupil support team and the health and safety team. Together, they have created an inclusive school ethos in which pupils make good progress and staff and pupils feel valued.

All leaders have clear roles and responsibilities, which focus very effectively on school improvement targets. The school's plans and policies focus well on meeting pupils' needs and raising standards. Staff work consistently well as a team and communication throughout the school is a strong feature.

The managers of the organisation and the governing body share the school's vision, are very supportive of the school and monitor the school's performance effectively. Staff performance is monitored regularly, and evaluated through an inclusive and secure performance management and appraisal system.

Opportunities for peer observation and sharing good practice with other schools are well developed. The school provides very good opportunities for peer observation, within the school, through its learning support team. The school has established a culture of sharing good practice which is impacting positively on teaching and learning.

All leaders attend appropriate leadership courses either in the Vale of Glamorgan or at Swansea University. They use the performance management and appraisal procedures very effectively to identify whole school training and development needs.

As a result, the school is able to meet the individual, specific and changing needs of the pupils in order to raise standards. This includes working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All staff contribute well to school planning and improvement.

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

### **Improving quality: Good**

The process of self-evaluation is well embedded in the school. All staff and pupils contribute effectively to the process and the self-evaluation report is based on first hand evidence and a good range of data. The school seeks and values the views of parents and an appropriate range of stakeholders. These views are incorporated well into the self-evaluation report. However, governors are not fully involved in the self-evaluation processes.

As a result of the self-evaluation processes, leaders have clearly identified the school's strengths and the areas for improvement. The school has produced a school improvement plan, which links well to the self-evaluation report. Although the school plans carefully for improvement, this information is not yet outlined well enough in the school improvement plan. The plan is not comprehensive and lacks sufficient detail.

The school has effective systems in place for managing performance. There are well-established procedures for regular classroom observations by leaders, which provide teachers with valuable written feedback and actions for improvements.

All staff have access to a wide range of courses and training, which impact positively on improving standards of individual pupils and groups of pupils.

The school is continuously developing and using a wide range of data to monitor the progress of individual pupils over time. This is used well to inform school improvement and improve pupils' outcomes.

The school has established very effective networks of professional practice with other special schools, mainstream schools and partners. Their commitment and involvement with a wide range of partners are having a positive impact on the wellbeing and outcomes for pupils. This has enabled staff to share and model good practice and the school to further develop the curriculum and opportunities for accreditation.

Recent annual monitoring notes of visits have been positive and the school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous year's visit.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has developed strong links with a wide range of partners. Headlands staff regularly share expertise with other Action for Children schools, mainstream schools and special schools to develop strategies for improving teaching and learning and managing behaviour.

Successful partnerships have been established with the local authority and staff access a wide range of courses and initiatives. Good partnerships with local colleges, and colleges near to pupils' homes, provide pupils with a range of appropriate vocational courses. This prepares them well to move onto full-time college placements.

The school works closely with Careers Wales to provide pupils with impartial careers advice and guidance that is tailored to their particular needs.

There are good links with placing authorities. They contribute effectively to planning and reviewing progress of pupils at the school. Where pupils have additional learning needs, the school works closely with the authorities to ensure that the needs of pupils are met.

The school engages the services of a specialist teacher, clinical psychologist and consultant educational psychologist. Currently trainee educational psychologists are supporting the implementation of nurture provision at the school as part of their studies.

Staff build effective relationships with parents prior to pupils starting at the school and undertake home visits. This allows parents to gain a better understanding of what the school can provide and aids the process of transition.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school has a good range of specialist teachers with a wide range of relevant knowledge and experience. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning experiences. Staff support the individual learning and behavioural needs of the pupils effectively.

Professional development opportunities and planning, preparation and assessment time are used well to ensure that staff skills are updated on a regular basis. Class teachers and teaching assistants have daily allocated time to work together to effectively review the learning and behaviour of pupils and to plan improvements.

The organisation manages resources well to support and improve the learning environment, for example by investment in the fabric of the buildings and equipment. Resources such as ICT equipment are of good quality and are well matched to the interests and abilities of the pupils.

Areas of the school, such as the post-16 area and the key stage 2 area, have been successfully designed to ensure that they are age appropriate.

Spending priorities and training programmes link closely with the school's improvement plan. They address whole-school priorities and are monitored carefully.

The school's financial management is robust and, as a result, the school provides value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Eleven parents responded to the questionnaire. All responses were very positive. All agree that their child was helped to settle well at the school and that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. They all agree that they are satisfied with the school and that their child likes, and feels safe, in the school. All agree that they are comfortable about approaching the school and understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. They all agree that teaching is good and that staff treat pupils with respect. All agree that their child receives good support and is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise, to be more mature and to take on more responsibility. All parents agree that their child is well prepared for moving onto the next school, college or place of work. They all agree that the school is well run. Most parents agree that pupils behave well in the school.

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

Five primary school pupils and 20 secondary school pupils responded to the questionnaire and, overall, are positive about their school. Many of the pupils agree that they feel safe in the school and that they have someone to talk to if they are worried. The majority of the pupils agree that the school teaches them to be healthy and encourages them to take regular exercise. Many pupils agree that the school helps them to learn and make progress. Most pupils feel that they are doing well in school and that they have enough books and equipment to do their work. Most pupils agree that staff treat them fairly and with respect, help them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds, and prepare them well for college or work. Around half of the pupils disagree with two statements, that the school stops bullying and that the school listens to their views and make the changes they suggest. The majority of pupils do not feel that pupils behave well so that they can get their work done.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Meinir Rees	Reporting Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
Huw Davies	Team Inspector
Ann Williams-Brunt	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5
Joseph Osbaldeston	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

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

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	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 four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	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.