



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

A report on

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About The Haven

The Haven is an independent school providing education for up to eight pupils aged 11 to 19 who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). It is owned and managed by the charity Autism Initiatives.

The school is situated on the outskirts of Mold in north Wales.

The accommodation includes three learning areas that are comfortable and well resourced to meet the learning and social needs of the pupils. There are extensive grounds that include a greenhouse and vegetable gardens.

There are currently seven pupils on roll. All pupils are placed by Flintshire local authority and all have a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

The headteacher has provided leadership for the school since September 2014.

Summary

The headteacher communicates a clear vision for the school, based on a strong set of pupil-centred values. There are strong working relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, most pupils improve their behaviour, engage well in lessons and make steady progress in developing their social and communication skills.

The school provides a varied range of learning experiences that meet the needs of pupils well. The comprehensive personal and social education programme provides pupils with valuable age-appropriate information about a wide range of important issues. However, the quality of teaching varies considerably across the school. Overall, it is adequate and needs improvement. Systems to track and monitor pupil progress in key skills are underdeveloped.

Leaders have started to analyse the outcomes of self-evaluation and set appropriate targets for school improvement. However, school development planning lacks detail and the proprietor does not hold the school to account well enough for pupil outcomes and the quality of provision.

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

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

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

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:

- put a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and utilise the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress 1(3)(g)
- have a framework in place by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms 1(4)

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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:

- improve the management of health and safety procedures to ensure that the school has regard to National Assembly guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers of schools 3(4)
- maintain the attendance register in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 3(9)

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 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Produce a baseline of pupils' skills from which to track and monitor pupil progress
- R3 Improve arrangements to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent
- R4 Increase the range of accreditation available to pupils
- R5 Improve self evaluation to have a tighter focus on pupils' standards

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

Due to the specific needs of the pupils, it is not appropriate to compare the school's performance with national averages. Pupils' attainment and achievement are judged on an individual pupil basis.

Prior to starting at the school, many of the pupils have missed out on periods of their education. During their time at The Haven, most pupils make significant progress in learning to manage their behaviours, settle down and engage in lessons. This enables them to start making progress in their learning.

Most pupils make steady progress in developing their social and communication skills, in line with their needs. They learn to deal with their anxieties and gradually develop their ability to talk to other pupils, staff and visitors to the school. As their confidence increases, they cope better with situations outside the school setting, for example ordering a drink in the café. Most pupils demonstrate appropriate behaviour when in the community. For example, they learn to use relevant language and shake hands when they are introduced to someone new.

Most pupils develop their thinking and problem-solving skills well. For example, when building an animal pen, they research the different options, decide what is needed and buy the relevant materials. They work together as a team to follow the instructions.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their number skills and can apply these in real life situations. For example, they work out what they can afford to buy in the shop and take measurements when buying new bookshelves for the school.

More able pupils work out the cost of buying a new car, by comparing the finance deal a garage would offer with a loan from a bank.

Pupils' literacy skills are less well developed. Many of the pupils are able to extract information from texts and answer questions correctly. However, they generally provide short written answers, especially when using worksheets. A majority of pupils make frequent spelling mistakes which they do not correct. A very few more able pupils use extended writing, with correct spelling and punctuation.

Most pupils use information and communication technology effectively on occasions to produce written work. For a few pupils who struggle with their handwriting, this helps them gain in confidence as they are able to produce well-presented work. Most pupils use ICT confidently to research different topics, such as substance misuse and recipes. Most do this independently, or with very little help.

A minority of pupils gain accreditation for work that they have done. For example, they achieve level 1 or 2 in Essential Skills Wales English and mathematics.

Around half of school leavers move successfully on to college placements or employment. This includes full-time work with a landscape gardener and a construction company. Given their needs, this is a significant achievement. Two of these pupils have passed their driving tests.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Pupils start at the school with little confidence and have difficulty controlling their behaviour. Most have a history of poor attendance and exclusion in their previous schools. Over time, most pupils make strong progress in developing the skills they need to understand their feelings and manage their behaviour successfully. They respond well to the school's caring ethos, and positive approach to behaviour support. As a result, most pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. There have been no exclusions since the school opened.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Most pupils feel safe in school and know that staff will support them well when they feel worried. Most pupils are punctual to lessons, settle promptly and engage well in their learning. Those pupils that have difficulty sustaining their concentration and behaviour respond appropriately to staff intervention and return quickly to learning.

A majority of pupils make strong progress with their ability to work with others and solve problems. They work collaboratively in groups and in pairs and work well independently. They listen and respond well to others and make a positive contribution to group discussions and small group activities such as playing board games.

Nearly all pupils develop their confidence and social skills well through regular planned activities in the local community. Generally, pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to each other, to staff and to visitors.

Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking and taking regular exercise. They make beneficial food and drink choices at lunchtimes and throughout the school day. Nearly all pupils engage well in a wide range of physical activities. These include swimming, trampolining and bowling.

Pupils respond very well to the emphasis the school places on teaching pupils how to recognise danger and keep themselves safe. They demonstrate suitable awareness of the potential dangers of the internet and social media. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards equality and fairness through exploring these issues regularly in personal and social education lessons.

Many pupils with a poor record of attendance from their previous school make sound progress improving their attendance. However, the persistent absence of a few pupils has a negative impact on their standards and wellbeing. Overall, attendance at the school is too low.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a varied range of learning experiences that meet the needs of pupils well. This includes National Curriculum subjects as well as activities such as independent living skills, topic work and grounds maintenance. There are opportunities for pupils to work individually and in groups. This enables them to develop their social and communication skills. Programmed 'self-occupancy' sessions, in which pupils can sit quietly on their own doing a chosen activity, help them to develop their independence and cope with the demands of a busy school day. This has a positive impact on their learning.

The school organises worthwhile visits to places of interest, for example the Wales Rally Service Park and a lifeboat station. Community access visits have a clear focus on developing pupils' social and communications skills. Staff provide useful activities to address individual pupils' particular difficulties. For example, when pupils find it difficult to ask for something in a shop, staff arrange visits to give pupils opportunities to practise these skills.

A residential trip to Anglesey provides pupils with valuable opportunities to practise important living skills that they have learned at school. For example, they prepare their own food and wash their clothes. For many of the pupils, this is the first time that they have been away from their families. The experience helps them develop their independence skills.

Visitors to the school, for example the police, paramedics and Assembly Members give pupils a greater understanding of the world of work. A few pupils benefit from work experience at, for example, a local day nursery and a construction site.

The quality of teaching varies considerably across the school. Overall, it is adequate and needs improvement.

Nearly all staff develop an extremely positive relationship with the pupils, which helps them develop confidence and self-esteem and engage in learning. In a majority of lessons, staff use a suitable range of teaching strategies which keep the pupils on task and maintain their interest. They choose interesting topics to study, for example earthquakes and orcas. They make effective use of questioning, giving pupils time to reflect before giving an answer. However, in a minority of lessons, there is too much emphasis on working from text books and completing worksheets.

Effective verbal feedback during most lessons provides pupils with support and encouragement and motivates them to complete tasks. Staff encourage pupils to review their work and correct their mistakes independently. However, written feedback does not help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

The school provides pupils with useful opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. This includes writing lists and handling money when visiting the local shop and café. However, planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills is not co-ordinated well enough across the school to ensure progression. Provision for the development of information and communication technology skills is underdeveloped.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school's caring and supportive ethos provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils. Staff know the social, emotional and communication needs of their pupils well. They manage behaviour skilfully, take time to listen to pupils' concerns and provide pupils with a high level of support and reassurance. This has an important impact on pupil wellbeing.

The school promotes important values such as honesty, fairness and teamwork successfully. This helps pupils to understand their own needs and respect the needs of others.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills in regular trips to the community. The school plans useful activities for pupils to develop independent living skills that prepare them well for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life. For example, pupils learn how to use garden machinery safely, prepare and cook healthy meals and use a washing machine.

The school's comprehensive personal, social education programme provides pupils with valuable age-appropriate information about a wide range of important issues. These include how to behave in public, sex and relationships education, health education and substance misuse. There is strong provision for teaching pupils how to be safe, including being safe online and how to be safe in different social situations. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. However, during the inspection an issue relating to the management of health and safety procedures was brought to the attention of the proprietor.

The school has established productive relationships with parents. Staff provide useful information for parents in regular reports on pupil progress that help parents support their children's learning and wellbeing. The school has also provided valuable training for parents on the importance of keeping children safe online and the dangers of social media.

Systems to track and monitor pupil progress in key skills are underdeveloped. The school does not have a reliable baseline of pupils' abilities. As a result, targets in individual education plans are not specific enough and the school is not able to evidence the progress that pupils make over time in their literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills.

The school has developed a useful system to gather data on pupil attendance, behaviour and engagement in lessons. However, staff do not use this information well enough when setting targets for these important aspects of pupil wellbeing. There is insufficient focus in school improvement planning to address the persistent absence of a few pupils.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher communicates a clear vision for the school, based on a strong set of pupil-centred values. This vision helps pupils to develop strategies that support their participation in society and acquire skills to become lifelong learners. The values, which are clearly shared by all staff, have had a positive impact on pupils, who demonstrate progress in their engagement with learning and improved social skills.

There is a comprehensive range of appropriate policies that are reviewed annually. These policies, clearly understood by staff, ensure that the needs of pupils with autism are met well. The useful programme of staff meetings focus on pupil engagement, attendance and behaviour and ensure consistency across the team.

The school has an extensive programme of staff training and development in relation to wellbeing and autism. All new employees undergo induction and receive valuable training in core areas including safeguarding, positive behaviour support and the

administration of medication. However, training on approaches to teaching and learning is limited. Procedures for the performance management of staff, including the headteacher, are not robust enough.

The headteacher has developed useful strategic partnerships with other schools to further develop staff's abilities to support the pupils. This school-to-school work has covered important areas of pupil wellbeing such as radicalisation and extremism, online safety and pupil engagement. The school has also formed a valuable partnership with a local college in order to extend the learning experiences of pupils. This partnership also helps pupils to make a smooth transition to college

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development at the school. The headteacher has put in place a process of self-evaluation, drawing on the views of staff and a limited range of first-hand evidence, including lesson observations. The headteacher has identified three important priorities for development. However, the links between self-evaluation and school development targets are not clear enough. The school development plan does not allocate suitable actions, resources and timescales to address these priorities.

The headteacher and director of finance review spending decisions annually and plan the budget. The classroom and other indoor learning areas are well maintained and support the delivery of the curriculum well. The outdoor learning environment enables pupils to learn new skills and enhances their physical and mental wellbeing.

The proprietor has allocated a headteacher from another school in the organisation to provide peer support and line management for the headteacher. However, roles and responsibilities are unclear. The proprietor does not hold the school to account well enough for pupil outcomes and the quality of provision.

Staff are deployed effectively to ensure that pupils' social and emotional needs are supported well. Following very recent staffing changes, the current team of staff are working together effectively to provide continuity for the pupils under difficult circumstances.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress against recommendations from previous visits.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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:

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