



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

**A report on**

**Dan y Coed**

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Dan y Coed

Dan y Coed school is an independent special school situated in the West Cross area of Swansea. The school opened in November 2017 and is owned by Orbis Education and Care. It is part of the portfolio of August Equity, a private equity investment company.

The school is in a large, detached property with easy access to the Mumbles coastline and the city of Swansea. The school shares the site with its residential provision, which provides a twenty-bed, 52-week provision, which opened in May 2019.

Currently there are 22 pupils attending the school. 7 pupils are residential in the on-site care home and 15 are day pupils. Nearly all pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and English as their first language. 11 of the pupils have looked after status. Pupils are placed at the school from local authorities in Wales and England. The head of education has been in post since September 2017. The school has five class teachers, 5 lead learning support assistants and 28 learning support assistants. In addition, care workers from the residential setting support children in lessons and activities as required.

A clinical team, including a speech and language therapist and occupational therapist technician, supports the education team. The school's aim is to 'provide a safe and secure school environment that encourages individuality, confidence and self-esteem'. The school's first core inspection was in November 2022.

## Main findings

### Strengths

Staff at the school know the pupils well and foster positive relationships with them. The strong working relationships have a positive impact on improving pupils' confidence and positive behaviour. Staff make highly effective use of this knowledge to tailor learning opportunities that are matched successfully to pupils' individual needs.

The school provides a flexible and balanced curriculum, both at the school and within the community. The curriculum caters well to the needs, interests, and aspirations of pupils. The learning opportunities acquired at the school enable a few pupils to transition successfully to mainstream education.

The school provides a calm and nurturing environment. The recent investment in outdoor and digital learning resources has enhanced pupils' well-being and learning experiences.

Leaders at the school provide highly effective strategic leadership. They communicate a clear vision. They are reflective and respond robustly to the changing needs of pupils at the school.

Staff across the school share a strong commitment to professional learning and development. They benefit from valuable opportunities to identify and share good practice. Staff collaboration is a particular strength.

## Areas for development

Overall, the school has made suitable progress in developing pupils' digital skills progressively. However, this is still in the early stages of development.

## Recommendations

### The school should:

- R1 Strengthen and consolidate opportunities to develop pupils' ICT skills progressively across the curriculum

## **Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report**

### **R1. Improve opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology skills progressively across the curriculum**

The school has made appropriate and purposeful progress against this recommendation.

The school has started to put worthwhile measures in place to improve provision for pupils to develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills progressively across the curriculum.

The school has recently developed a new digital suite and has benefitted from further investment in digital hardware in all classes. These resources allow pupils valuable opportunities to practice their information and communication skills. For example, many pupils can now independently access their own digital accounts with the use of adaptive hardware. They send and receive emails, access learning platforms, and use communication platforms suitably. A few pupils have developed creative digital animations and in music they have used software to develop individual compositions. They use their ICT skills progressively with a reduction in external support.

Staff have benefited from valuable opportunities to observe good practice in ICT at other schools and colleges. In addition, many teaching staff have accessed beneficial professional learning opportunities to develop their understanding and improve practice across the school.

However, digital progress across the curriculum is in the early stages of development.

### **R2. Strengthen the opportunities for pupils to develop work related opportunities**

The school has made strong progress against this recommendation. The school has appointed a senior leader with responsibility for overseeing the provision and evaluation of work related opportunities for all pupils across the curriculum.

Leaders at the school have developed valuable opportunities for pupils to learn in a range of exciting activities outside the classroom. As a result, pupils develop a range of important skills such as independence, confidence and resilience. These skills prepare pupils well for experiences beyond the school.

Nearly all pupils are involved in appropriate work related activities both within the school and the community. These activities relate well to pupils' additional learning needs and interests. Pupils develop worthwhile skills which support their understanding of the world of work.

Staff have identified and made beneficial links with a range of local providers to offer work experience opportunities for pupils. For example, many pupils benefit from valuable regular work experience programmes at a local organic company, at the

school bank and at a local enterprise, which includes opportunities to work at a shop, café, laundry, office and kitchen. In addition, pupils gain worthwhile accreditation for this work.

As a result of pupils' engagement in work related opportunities, many pupils' attendance has improved, and a very few pupils have transferred to a local mainstream college because of skills acquired on work experience placement. In addition, the school has recently been presented with a recognised quality award for its outdoor and work related curriculum offer.

### **R3. Formalise the evaluation of professional learning opportunities for all staff**

The school has made strong progress to formalise the evaluation of professional learning opportunities for all staff.

The school has a strong focus on the career development of staff. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas of development for staff and provide 'road maps' for professional growth. Staff are well trained and, as a result, support pupils effectively within the school.

The professional learning offer for staff is enhanced by strong partnerships with external providers such as the Open University. Leaders supply valuable opportunities for staff to undertake teaching qualifications and to improve their practice.

The development of in-house trainers and collaboration across the organisation in areas such as communication and ICT positively supports staff understanding and pupils' engagement in learning.

Senior leaders develop knowledge and skills successfully through an effective mentoring programme. In addition, a distributed leadership approach enables staff to take ownership of areas of responsibility and enhances capacity.

The school is beginning to embed a professional enquiry approach to learning for staff. Topics include learning outside the classroom and use of ICT. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this.

Leaders regularly evaluate professional learning opportunities through 'feedback Fridays' and the school's performance management process. Leaders use online forms to gather staff views on the value of training. In addition, leaders evaluate the impact of professional learning opportunities on teaching and learning through learning walks and formal lesson observations.

## **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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 2.

### **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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 7.

## **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:

Publications Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:  
<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>