



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

A report on

Woodlands School

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Woodlands School

Woodlands School is owned by Woodlands Children's Development Centre Limited and aims to provide an integrated approach to education, care and therapy for the children in its care. The school provides highly specialised education and therapy for boys aged between 11 and 18 years of age who have complex behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and autism.

There are 21 pupils, aged between 11 and 18 years of age, on roll at the school. Many have statements of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). All pupils are looked after by their local authorities and live in the Woodlands children's homes in the local area. A few pupils are placed by local authorities in Wales; many are placed by local authorities in England.

The school is located within the town of Wrexham close to local amenities and leisure facilities.

An outdoor education facility comprising of woodlands and a workshop is located on the site of one of the children's homes.

Main findings

Strengths

Woodlands School offers a nurturing and supportive environment for pupils. Staff build strong positive relationships with pupils built on trust and respect and, as a result, pupils are highly engaged in their learning. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and are confident to discuss their experiences of the school.

The school supports pupils' transitions when they join and leave the school highly effectively. The school offers beneficial outreach support for pupils who have left the school and moved to new placements, work or higher education. This support includes comprehensive transition plans that detail the progress pupils have made and ensure that they continue to get the support they require.

Pupils have regular opportunities to enrich their learning through the school's outdoor education provision. This provides pupils with an opportunity to learn in a different environment and provides valuable opportunities to develop problem-solving skills, teamwork skills and vocational education.

The school offers a broad curriculum and a variety of GCSEs and A-level subjects for pupils to complete where appropriate to interest, ability and/or need. For example, the school's provision provides the opportunity for pupils to study specialist subjects such as A level chemistry.

Areas for development

Leaders have a range of valuable policies and procedures that appropriately reflect the work of the school. Generally, these are comprehensive and contain useful information in relation to the policy area. However, in a few cases, paperwork is not completed with enough detail in line with the policies, which may result in inconsistencies in monitoring and reporting.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Ensure that policies and procedures reflect the most recent Welsh Government guidance and are implemented consistently, including the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Strengthen arrangements to assess pupils on entry to the school and to assess their progress over time

Since the last inspection, the school has further strengthened its arrangements to assess pupils upon entry to the school and monitor their progress over time.

The school collects a wide range of relevant and detailed information about pupils upon entry to the school. This information includes academic, therapeutic, and behavioural assessment data. This data is shared and updated regularly with relevant staff and provides them with useful strategies to keep pupils safe, meet their needs and engage them in their learning. The school robustly uses this data to track pupils' progress, and this is shared with relevant stakeholders in comprehensive reports.

R2. Extend the provision for outdoor learning to include opportunities for design technology

The school has made strong progress towards this recommendation. The outdoor education site provides a calm and nurturing environment where relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Nearly all pupils learn to work with natural materials such as wood in project topics and a few are working towards the completion of a GCSE in design and technology. Over time, pupils develop valuable skills such as taking risks, creative thinking and working as a team. This successfully supports them to become more resourceful, innovative, enterprising and capable individuals.

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 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

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