



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
Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School

Date of inspection: March 2011

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:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	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.

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Context

Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School is an independent school situated close to the market town of Welshpool, Powys. The school provides education, care and therapy for pupils with additional learning needs who are 'looked after' by local authorities in Wales and England.

At the time of the inspection the school educated 11 pupils, all of whom are boys who live in the care home which shares the school's site. Eight of the pupils are of secondary school age and three pupils are post-16. Seven pupils have statements of special educational needs. All of the pupils are from homes where English is the predominant language. Two pupils come from a minority ethnic or mixed ethnic background.

The number on roll has increased steadily since the school opened in 2005. In the last twelve months, the number of pupils has almost doubled, rising from six to 11. The present head of education has been in post for three years. This is the first inspection of the school.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

The school has a number of strengths including that:

- the inclusive and caring ethos of the school ensures that all pupils and staff are valued;
- most pupils make good progress; and
- the school makes good provision for the wellbeing of the pupils.

However, the overall current performance of the school is judged as adequate because:

- the individual learning needs of the pupils are not always identified well enough;
- pupils have too few opportunities to develop their numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum; and
- teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to engage pupils.

Prospects for improvement

Leaders and managers have created a positive and caring ethos throughout the school. In addition, the school is well resourced and provides a good learning environment.

However, the prospects for improvement at Amberleigh are judged as adequate because:

- leaders and managers do not monitor the standards of teaching and learning rigorously enough;
- teachers and other staff involved in education do not have enough opportunities to access a programme of continuing professional development; and
- self-evaluation is not well developed.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

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

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have regard to any National Assembly guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers of schools by providing a current asbestos survey.

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

The school needs to:

- R1 comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 by ensuring an asbestos survey of the building is carried out;
- R2 ensure that leaders and managers monitor the standards of teaching and learning rigorously as part of a robust process of self-evaluation to ensure that standards of attainment are raised;
- R3 ensure that assessment processes clearly identify the individual learning needs of all pupils and that the data collected is used to inform teachers' planning;
- R4 increase opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT and numeracy skills across the curriculum;
- R5 provide good quality training opportunities to allow staff to further develop their skills in identifying appropriate strategies to meet the individual learning needs of the pupils; and
- R6 further develop partnership working with a range of agencies to increase the standards of attainment and range of experiences of the pupils.

What happens next?

Since the inspection report notes that the school does not meet one or more of 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 must 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 the current development plan to show what action 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 or carers at the school.

Estyn will continue to monitor the education provided by the school through the annual monitoring programme for independent special schools.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

It is not appropriate to compare standards with national averages or to analyse trends in performance over time because of the very specific nature of the school.

Pupils who have attended the school for some time make adequate progress in meeting their individual learning targets and achieve appropriate qualifications. Pupils who have attended the school for shorter periods do not always make sufficient progress in relation to their targets or prior attainment. They leave with few or no qualifications. During the past three years, a significant minority of pupils have moved on to appropriate further education courses. Other pupils have moved to specialist settings.

Across the school, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their agreed learning goals. However, pupils do not make consistent progress in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils listen and behave consistently well in the majority of lessons.

Nearly all pupils have the necessary skills to communicate well orally with each other and with adults. Nearly all pupils make good progress with their reading skills. This enables them to access the curriculum, in line with their ability. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills across the curriculum and a minority of pupils produce very good pieces of creative and extended writing.

Pupils have appropriate ICT skills. They use different programmes to present work and know how to access information when researching different topics. Pupils make adequate progress in developing their numeracy skills but they do not use good numeracy or ICT skills consistently across the curriculum. Pupils develop their thinking skills well and learn to apply skills in a relevant manner to everyday life.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe and well supported in the school and understand what it is to be healthy. They all follow a unit of work on healthy eating and value and enjoy the regular practical cookery sessions. They have access to a wide range of physical activities during the school day and after school which are very well attended. Opportunities to participate in physical exercise at the local leisure centre enables pupils to improve their social skills and to interact appropriately with peers and members of the wider community.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. However, a minority of pupils do not always engage well in lessons and lack motivation when completing all tasks. School attendance is consistently high, although a few pupils do not always attend the lessons they should.

All pupils are members of the well-established school council. They play an active role in making decisions, for example about improvements to the school grounds or choices regarding extra-curricular activities. A member of the school council attends staff meetings.

Pupils are polite and courteous. They relate well to each other, their teachers, support staff and visitors to the school. They feel supported in making appropriate option choices. However, their involvement in making choices about how and what they learn is under developed.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Adequate
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils. The school has started to develop appropriate links with local employers and other education providers. However, opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work are not developed well enough.

Provision for developing communication skills across the curriculum is good. In the majority of lessons, pupils use these skills appropriately to enhance the quality of their work.

The development of numeracy skills is not planned consistently across the curriculum and pupils are given limited opportunities to build and extend ICT skills in lessons.

The school offers stimulating experiences which support all pupils to understand about healthy living, sustainability and global citizenship. Residential and school staff work together well to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as gardening, bike mechanics and sports.

Teaching: Adequate

Teaching was good in half of the lessons observed. Where teaching was good, teachers and support staff develop positive relationships with pupils and use effective strategies to engage reluctant pupils. In these lessons, teachers' planning provides clear learning objectives that are shared and understood by pupils. Teachers have detailed subject knowledge and activities meet individual pupils' needs.

Where teaching was judged to be less than good, lesson plans did not offer clear and concise learning objectives or sufficient detail about how topics and tasks would meet the specific needs of pupils. In these lessons, teachers do not use an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources.

The school collects assessment data for English, mathematics and science. However, this data is not analysed or used consistently to monitor progress and inform planning.

The individual learning needs of pupils are not always clearly identified to ensure that very clear targeted and effective support is introduced. This prevents the pupils from making good, consistent progress in all areas of the curriculum.

There are effective systems in place which allow pupils to reflect on their behaviour throughout the day. This has a positive impact on engagement during lessons. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they and others have learned, and what they need to do to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a high level of care. Provision for personal and social education, and for supporting pupils health and wellbeing, is good. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, they provide activities that encourage them to discuss, write and think about other cultures.

There is useful provision to support pupils in making choices and identifying appropriate learning pathways. All pupils have access to well-planned transition processes and support on admission to the school and when moving on.

Support for pupils at the beginning and end of the day is good and prepares them well for transition between the care home and school. These sessions are well structured and supported by care and education staff. Through this support, nearly all pupils are engaged positively in choosing a range of activities which support their personal and social development.

The school encourages pupils to take increasing levels of responsibility. Pupils are expected to participate in a range of jobs and activities which contribute positively to the school community.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is in the early stages of development. Some targeted support ensures that pupils make appropriate progress, for example in reading. Pupils do not always get the specific support they require to make progress in line with their ability.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school has established a strong inclusive ethos which provides a positive and supportive environment for pupils. Pupils take part in all aspects of school life. Their views are sought and valued on a wide range of issues. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

Classroom environments are comfortable to work in and have recently undergone significant improvements. Displays are topical and relevant and feature pupils' work.

The school has a range of appropriate learning resources which are well matched to the interests and abilities of the pupils. The quality and range of ICT equipment are good.

The company has developed the school environment to provide some sporting and recreational facilities for the pupils. Pupils take pride in growing vegetables in the grounds and maintain bicycles in the school workshop. However, most organised sporting activities take place off-site in the local community.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Adequate
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Leadership: Adequate

The directors of the company take an active part in the day-to-day life of the pupils. One company director also acts as the manager of the children's home. The educational provision is overseen by a lead teacher who acts as Head of Education. These leaders and managers have established a positive ethos which is shared by all staff and pupils. Care and education staff and directors of the company work well as a team.

However, the strategic management of education is not strong enough. Not all teaching staff have a clear overview, based on first hand evidence, of the priorities required to improve the outcomes for pupils. Nor do leaders and managers understand what support and training is needed by staff in order to improve and develop their skills.

The performance of education staff is monitored but not always rigorously enough. Staff targets are not always clear and do not focus enough on measurable outcomes.

Individual curriculum areas are, generally, organised well by the teachers responsible for that subject. These teachers have developed good procedures for tracking and recording the achievements of the pupils. However, this good practice is not always reflected at the more strategic level. Although the school collects an increasing range of performance data there is little clarity on how this data is used to inform planning or impact on the outcomes for the pupils.

The school meets most of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. However, to fully comply with the Regulations the school needs to comply with regulation 3(4) by providing a current asbestos survey

Improving quality: Adequate

The process and culture of self-evaluation is at an early stage of development in the school. However, the self-evaluation report produced prior to inspection represents an honest and accurate view of the school as it is now. Although the school collects a range of performance data this is not used consistently to inform self-evaluation and strategic planning.

Staff and pupils contribute fully to the school's process of self-evaluation. The views of pupils are taken very seriously through both formal means, such as the school council, and during the day-to-day work of the school.

Leaders and managers in the school do not accurately identify areas for development and consequently planning for school improvement is not secure enough. Opportunities to formally share existing good practice across the whole school are not fully developed.

Although there has been some shared training with neighbouring independent schools, staff do not have access to an appropriate range of courses and other developmental opportunities.

Networks of professional practice exist within the school. Staff from education, care and therapies share information well to address the social and care needs of the pupils. However, opportunities to share information to improve teaching and raise levels of pupil attainment are not developed well enough. The school is an active member of two professional bodies representing similar schools. However, the impact of this networking on pupils' attainment and achievement is not clear.

Partnership working: Adequate

The school works well with a range of key partners including placing authorities and parents or carers. There are good examples of partnership working with other agencies, such as local authority children's services, to address the social and personal needs of the pupils. Although there are some good and developing links with careers services, opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work through work experience placements are limited. Partnerships with colleges of further education have benefited individual pupils but have not been developed further to benefit more pupils.

Individual members of staff have developed valuable links with local schools and use these to access resources, such as assessment materials, which they use effectively in their work at the school. However, links with other education providers, at the strategic level, have not been developed well enough.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has an appropriate range of staff with relevant knowledge and experience. Support staff are deployed well within the school and support pupils' learning effectively.

Professional development opportunities and planning, preparation and assessment time are not used well enough to ensure that staff skills are updated on a regular and planned basis.

The shortcomings in the self-evaluation process and strategic planning mean that the procedures to ensure that resources are allocated to key priorities are not developed well enough.

The school's financial management is robust. The company manages resources to support and improve the learning environment well, for example by investment in the fabric of the buildings and equipment.

As a result of this sound financial management, the school provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from all 11 of the pupils at the school. Most of these pupils state that they feel safe in school and have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. However, almost half of the pupils stated that the school could do better in the way it deals with bullying. They all say that staff encourage them to take responsibility and keep healthy. They all agree that staff help them with problems and to learn and make progress. Most say that the staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect. Almost all pupils confirm that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds. Most pupils feel that the school prepares them well for moving on.

All pupils feel that they are doing well in school although almost half say that poor behaviour sometimes stops them from doing their work. All feel that their views are listened to and that they are encouraged to take on responsibility.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mike Munting HMI	Reporting Inspector
Meinir Rees HMI	Team Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Team Inspector
Matthew Burns	Peer Inspector
Nick Ashton-Smith	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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