



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

**The Court Special School
96a Station Road
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5UX**

Date of inspection: June 2014

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 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

The Court School is a special school maintained by Cardiff City Council. The school supports primary aged pupils from four to 11 years old with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school aims to help pupils overcome their difficulties and where possible return to mainstream education. Eight pupils returned to mainstream school in the last academic year.

The school's motto is "Learning to learn together".

All pupils come from the city and county of Cardiff. Currently there are 38 boys and no girls. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. A few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. About 70% of pupils receive free school meals. This is well above the all Wales average.

Pupils are taught in five classes, which are broadly determined by need, ability level and age. One of these classes caters for pupils who also attend their mainstream schools. This class is called the Revolving Door.

The school was last inspected in 2008. The headteacher and deputy have both been in post since 2005.

The school works with the local authority behaviour support system on a termly basis to organise the referral and admission of pupils to the 'Revolving Door' provision. This is a joint programme with local primary and secondary school to return pupils to mainstream provision, supported by learning mentors. In this academic year, 18 out of 22 pupils in this class have returned to full-time mainstream provision.

The 2013-2014 individual school budget per pupil for The Court School is £20,783, which compares to a national average of £19,179 for all special schools in Wales.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- nearly all pupils make good progress and achieve the targets set in their individual education plans;
- many pupils show an increase in their attendance;
- the school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum;
- teachers and support staff work together very effectively to meet the individual needs of all pupils;
- partnership working is very carefully planned, monitored and evaluated and contributes well to improving pupils' wellbeing, learning opportunities and achievements; and
- the school has developed an innovative and successful re-integration programme with primary and secondary schools.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher, senior management team and all staff have a clear vision for the work of the school;
- development plans are clear, with realistic and measurable targets that result in improved outcomes for pupils;
- teaching and support staff are well qualified and well deployed to make best use of their expertise;
- all staff have good access to a wide range of training; and
- the budget is well managed and kept under careful scrutiny by leaders and managers.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' ability to use and apply their number skills across the curriculum
- R2 Address the health and safety issues identified by the team during the inspection and improve the physical environment in the time out rooms
- R3 Strengthen the role of the governing body to provide more rigorous challenge
- R4 Ensure that the school self-evaluation process is more analytical, taking into account a broader overview of data

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Pupils who join the school have a wide range of emotional and behavioural needs, which often make it difficult for them to access the curriculum. Many pupils lack self-control and are unable to manage their behaviour. Over time, they make significant progress according to their individual needs and abilities.

Programmes of study are individually tailored and it is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time.

Nearly all pupils know and understand the targets set in their individual education plans. They achieve their targets well. At present there are no girls on roll and there is no significant difference between the achievements of different groups of pupils.

The school has successfully developed a culture where many pupils learn to enjoy reading and read for pleasure. Pupils learn to comment on the text and answer relevant questions. Individual pupils respond well to targeted support and develop phonic strategies effectively. There are good examples of pupils making exceptional progress in their reading over a short period of time. For example, over a two year period, a few pupils who entered the school as non-readers have gained age-appropriate reading skills to enable them to meet the demands of a mainstream school curriculum.

In class, pupils answer questions confidently and write for a range of purposes and audiences. Spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation show improvement over time. Pupils recognise and value this important achievement.

Most pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills successfully in lessons to enhance their learning. They use a range of programs to research topics and to present work. Most pupils develop their understanding and use of number well. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills consistently across the curriculum.

Welsh language skills are a strong feature of the school. Nearly all pupils make good progress in relation to their needs and linguistic ability. They use incidental Welsh appropriately, remembering basic Welsh vocabulary and forming simple sentences confidently.

Nearly all pupils follow instructions carefully. They work well independently or in a group. Many pupils take a pride in their work and are eager to share it with others.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and well cared for. They know what to do if they are worried or bullied. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They recognise and value the support they receive from staff in helping with their learning and in managing their behaviour. They make major strides in learning to listen to and respect the opinions of others.

There is an exceptional culture of collaborative working across the school. As a result, pupils actively engage in the process of planning their own learning. They are able to reflect on their progress and regularly assess how well they and other pupils have completed tasks. They learn to work together extremely successfully either in pairs or small groups. This valuable way of working helps pupils to improve the quality of their work, accept criticism and be more positive about themselves and others. These are very important aspects of their personal development, which enable many pupils to return permanently to mainstream education and improve their life chances. This is an outstanding achievement for pupils who previously were unable to manage their behaviour.

Overall, pupils show courtesy and respect to staff and engage very well in lessons. They are welcoming to visitors, polite and eager to share their successes. Many pupils with challenging behaviour and low self-esteem gain confidence and maturity. Many pupils show an increase in their attendance when compared to that in their previous schools. Pupils who have attendance issues and their parents receive targeted help from the school's Attendance Officer. There have been no permanent exclusions during the past four years and the level of fixed term exclusions has reduced significantly to its current stable level.

The School Council members play a full part in making decisions about issues affecting school life. They are extensively involved in organising activities, which raised funds for Children in Need and for playground equipment for the school.

Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to discuss issues that may affect their lives and they learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they work with the fire service to understand the danger of arson.

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

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with a wide range of learning experiences suitable to meet pupils' needs.

There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills and independence, in and outside of the classroom. Pupils benefit from a wide range of practical activities, such as pupils in the Foundation Phase looking after the chickens, collecting their eggs and selling the eggs as part of a mini enterprise project.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. The comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson

plans clearly identify how pupils will develop these skills. However, the opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills effectively across all areas of the curriculum are less well developed.

Provision for the development of Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is good. This includes the annual St David's Day celebrations and visits to centres of Welsh heritage such as the museum at St Fagan's. Throughout the school day, pupils make good use of their developing Welsh skills. The Welsh dimension is included effectively across all areas of the curriculum.

There is a well-planned personal and social education programme including sex education. The school is successful in its development of aspects of sustainability. However, it does not develop pupils' understanding of other cultures and beliefs and its impact on their community well enough.

Extra-curricular activities provided during lunchtimes successfully extend pupils' learning. Examples of these are table tennis and a club where pupils use electronic tablet computers.

Teaching: Good

Teachers and support staff work together very effectively to meet the individual needs of all pupils. There are strong, supportive relationships between all staff and pupils. Behaviour management is effective and staff provide a secure atmosphere where pupils can improve their learning successfully.

Teachers have high expectations and share clear learning objectives with their pupils. They use good quality resources and varied activities, which motivate pupils to stay on task. Teachers use skilful questioning to develop pupils' understanding.

Staff provide encouraging oral feedback and nearly all pupils are aware of their targets. They make very good use of assessment for learning strategies across the school. Staff have developed a supportive, positive atmosphere in which pupils can regularly assess their own work and the work of others. This is strength of the school. Marking is up to date but often does not show pupils what they need to do to improve their own work.

Teachers keep detailed individual records to monitor the progress of each individual pupil. Parents and carers receive regular information about their child's progress in home school diaries. Annual reviews and end of year reports meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Clear policies are implemented well to promote pupils' health and wellbeing. Staff support and guide pupils well and pay particular attention to their emotional needs. Pupils have good access to a wide range of specialist support to help them deal with issues that concern them. This effective support includes educational psychologists, the school nurse, counselling services and children's services. Identified pupils receive specialist counselling support on a weekly basis.

A few pupils have additional learning needs as well as their behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Staff from external agencies, such as the speech and language therapy service, give classroom teachers the skills that they need to meet these pupils' needs. A wide range of professionals are involved in the annual and interim progress reviews.

The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and there are good opportunities for personal reflection.

There are effective policies and procedures in place for managing behaviour, which staff apply consistently. Staff use the points system well to make sure that pupils know how they are expected to behave. All staff have received appropriate training in behaviour management and the de-escalation of incidents. Positive handling plans are in place and discussed appropriately with parents. They are clearly linked to the pupils' individual behaviour plans. However, the recording of incidents is inconsistent and not always sufficiently detailed.

Risk assessments are completed for individual pupils. However, they lack detail and are not signed by parents.

Overall, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The school has developed an ethos where learning is valued and everyone is included. It successfully challenges stereotypes and actively promotes a sense of community based on mutual respect. All pupils have equal access to a wide range of curricular opportunities and activities.

There is an appropriate range of resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The grounds of the school are generally well maintained and used extensively to enrich pupils' experiences. The classrooms and main corridors are attractively decorated to support learning and showcase pupils' work and achievements.

The time out rooms are functional but have little atmosphere. The toilet facilities do not meet statutory requirements for the number of registered pupils. A few health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the headteacher and governing body.

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

The headteacher, senior management team and all staff have a clear vision for the work of the school. All staff feel valued and supported. They work very well together as a strong cohesive team. They share a commitment to raising standards. Curriculum and staff meetings enable staff to share good practice, exchange information and evaluate progress in meeting school priorities. There are

comprehensive policies, which focus on meeting the needs of very vulnerable pupils. Managers monitor and evaluate staff performance very well. They use the performance management process to identify and address individual and whole school training needs. All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are encouraged to reflect on their practice and share the responsibility for planning school improvement.

Governors give good support to the headteacher. They are very well informed and receive regular and comprehensive reports about the work of the school. These reports now include useful data about pupils' progress. However, governors do not yet fully challenge and hold the school to account for the standards and quality that it achieves.

The school addresses national and local priorities well. This includes the implementation of the Foundation Phase and the school's effective work to return pupils to mainstream education.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation is well established across the school. All staff contribute fully and effectively to the process. Pupils and parents gave their views in questionnaires. However, the school does not make enough use of the views of its wide range of partners within the community. The self-evaluation report focuses appropriately on strengths and areas for improvement. However, it is not always as evaluative as it could be and does not focus enough on pupil outcomes.

School leaders and officers from the local authority undertake a regular programme of classroom observations. They use these observations carefully to focus on improving teaching and learning. Staff receive clear written feedback and actions for improvement.

The school is beginning to collect a range of useful data to monitor the progress of individual pupils. However, this valuable information is not yet analysed fully or used well enough to determine the progress of the various groups of pupils in order to make comparisons and inform future planning.

There is a detailed improvement plan closely linked to the self-evaluation report with appropriate targets for improvement. Targets in the plan are clear, with realistic and measurable targets that result in improved outcomes for pupils. There are particularly detailed interim evaluations of initiatives such as transition learning mentors and the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has exemplary partnerships with external agencies and the local authority, as well as with mainstream schools and other special schools.

The school plans its partnership working carefully; and manages, monitors and evaluates its impact to ensure that it improves pupils' wellbeing, learning opportunities and achievements.

A strong partnership with parents and carers through the 'Chat in the Flat' scheme has provided an excellent opportunity for informal supportive links between parents and professionals. Parents and carers are able to gain valuable advice and discuss relevant issues such as behaviour and stress management strategies with school staff, the educational psychologist and school counsellor.

The school's highly effective professional learning community is well established with mainstream schools, special schools and the advisory team. This partnership provides an outstanding opportunity for joint working on the management of challenging behaviours. The Court School has supported other schools to reorganise their daily routines to encourage positive behaviours and purposeful activities. This high level analysis of school's day-to-day organisation in order to improve behaviour is sector leading.

The school has developed an innovative and successful re-integration programme with primary and secondary schools. The Court School staff and 'transitional learning mentors' provide carefully targeted support and guidance to mainstream schools on behaviour management. They give valuable advice on teaching strategies as well as providing practical support for pupils on transition programmes. These mentors have proved to be very effective and as a result the number of pupils who return to mainstream education and remain there has increased. The use of transitional learning mentors is highly beneficial to mainstream schools and pupils and supports successful reintegration.

The headteacher has worked very well with local partners to set up a very useful and well attended annual conference for special school and PRU staff. He has also set up a wellbeing conference' for headteachers from special schools in Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf, which provides good opportunities for professionals to share and develop their practice.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources effectively. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and well deployed to make best use of their expertise. Staff have good access to a wide range of training and development opportunities, which helps them make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and wellbeing.

The school is generally well resourced. Resources are used well to provide learning experiences that are well matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. As a result of self-evaluation the school has invested a significant amount of financial resources on improving literacy and numeracy resources.

Staff have appropriate planning preparation and assessment time. This enables them to plan their work carefully and provide pupils with a wide variety of personal and learning experiences.

The budget is well managed and kept under careful scrutiny by leaders and managers. This along with the good outcomes for pupils means that the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Primary Questionnaire (Overall)

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion		Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	
I feel safe in my school.	32		30 94%	2 6%	Rwy'n teimlo'n ddiogel yn fy ysgol.
			95%	5%	
The school deals well with any bullying.	32		26 81%	6 19%	Mae'r ysgol yn delio'n dda ag unrhyw fwlio.
			92%	8%	
I know who to talk to if I am worried or upset.	32		28 88%	4 12%	Rwy'n gwybod pwy i siarad ag ef/â hi os ydw I'n poeni neu'n gofidio.
			95%	5%	
The school teaches me how to keep healthy	32		31 97%	1 3%	Mae'r ysgol yn fy nysgu i sut i aros yn iach.
			98%	2%	
There are lots of chances at school for me to get regular exercise.	32		29 91%	3 9%	Mae llawer o gyfleoedd yn yr ysgol i mi gael ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
			98%	2%	
I am doing well at school	32		26 81%	6 19%	Rwy'n gwneud yn dda yn yr ysgol.
			96%	4%	
The teachers and other adults in the school help me to learn and make progress.	32		30 94%	2 6%	Mae'r athrawon a'r oedolion eraill yn yr ysgol yn fy helpu i ddysgu a gwneud cynnydd.
			100%	0%	
I know what to do and who to ask if I find my work hard.	32		30 94%	2 6%	Rwy'n gwybod beth I'w wneud a gyda phwy i siarad os ydw I'n gweld fy ngwaith yn anodd.
			98%	2%	
My homework helps me to understand and improve my work in school.	30		15 50%	15 50%	Mae fy ngwaith cartref yn helpu i mi ddeall a gwella fy ngwaith yn yr ysgol.
			81%	19%	
I have enough books, equipment, and computers to do my work.	32		30 94%	2 6%	Mae gen i ddigon o lyfrau, offer a chyfrifiaduron i wneud fy ngwaith.
			95%	5%	
Other children behave well and I can get my work done.	32		19 59%	13 41%	Mae plant eraill yn ymddwyn yn dda ac rwy'n gallu gwneud fy ngwaith.
			81%	19%	
Nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time	31		21 68%	10 32%	Mae bron pob un o'r plant yn ymddwyn yn dda amser chwarae ac amser cinio.
			83%	17%	

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the school.	14	13 93%	1 7%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r ysgol yn gyffredinol.
		74%	23%	1%	1%		
My child likes this school.	14	10 71%	4 29%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn hoffi'r ysgol hon.
		76%	22%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school.	14	12 86%	2 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn yr ysgol.
		76%	22%	1%	0%		
My child is making good progress at school.	14	11 79%	3 21%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn yr ysgol.
		64%	32%	2%	0%		
Pupils behave well in school.	14	1 7%	5 36%	5 36%	0 0%	3	Mae disgyblion yn ymddwyn yn dda yn yr ysgol.
		49%	36%	3%	0%		
Teaching is good.	13	9 69%	4 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		73%	24%	1%	1%		
Staff expect my child to work hard and do his or her best.	14	9 64%	5 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn disgwyl i fy mhentyn weithio'n galed ac i wneud ei orau.
		64%	32%	1%	0%		
The homework that is given builds well on what my child learns in school.	14	5 36%	5 36%	2 14%	0 0%	2	Mae'r gwaith cartref sy'n cael ei roi yn adeiladu'n dda ar yr hyn mae fy mhentyn yn ei ddysgu yn yr ysgol.
		40%	33%	8%	2%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	13	9 69%	4 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		71%	24%	1%	1%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	14	9 64%	4 29%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Caiff fy mhentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		66%	30%	1%	0%		
My child is safe at school.	14	8 57%	5 36%	1 7%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn ddiogel yn yr ysgol.
		72%	25%	1%	1%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	14	9 64%	5 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		67%	27%	2%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	14	10 71%	4 29%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		66%	29%	4%	1%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.	14	10 71%	3 21%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Rwy'n teimlo'n esmwyth ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r ysgol, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		73%	22%	2%	2%		
I understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.	14	8 57%	3 21%	0 0%	0 0%	3	Rwy'n deall trefn yr ysgol ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		53%	35%	3%	1%		
The school helps my child to become more mature and take on responsibility.	14	8 57%	5 36%	1 7%	0 0%	0	Mae'r ysgol yn helpu fy mhlentyn i ddod yn fwy aeddfed ac i ysgwyddo cyfrifoldeb.
		60%	34%	1%	0%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to the next school or college or work.	13	5 38%	6 46%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol nesaf neu goleg neu waith.
		39%	30%	8%	2%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	13	12 92%	1 8%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		68%	29%	1%	1%		
The school is well run.	13	11 85%	2 15%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r ysgol yn cael ei rhedeg yn dda.
		73%	24%	1%	1%		

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Elizabeth Ann Dackevych	Reporting Inspector
Michael William Ridout	Team Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
Andrea Louise Davies	Lay Inspector
Ladan Harper	Peer Inspector
Peter Owen	Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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 ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment