



**Annual monitoring inspection report on**

**The Branas School**

**Date of inspection: May 2015**

**by**

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

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

Branas School provides specialised education, residential care, and therapy for boys aged 11 to 16 who have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs and moderate learning difficulties. The school is owned and managed by Caretech Ltd.

The school currently has 17 pupils on roll. Twelve of the pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). All pupils speak English as their first language.

All pupils are looked-after by local authorities in Wales and England and live in children's homes operated by Caretech. The children's homes are registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales.

The school was last inspected by Estyn in June 2014. The present headteacher was appointed in 2010.

## Main findings

### Strengths

#### The school's strengths are that:

- Nearly all pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities and identified needs
- Nearly all pupils gain the skills they need to increase their independence and most make successful transitions to colleges of further education
- Effective links with a wide range of partners provide pupils with valuable learning opportunities and work experience; these match well with pupils' age, ability and interests
- Education, therapy and care support staff work well as a team and have high expectations of the pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress
- The headteacher communicates a clear vision for the school
- The school provides a nurturing learning environment where staff and pupils have good working relationships

### Areas for development

#### The school's areas for development are that:

- The development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not co-ordinated across the curriculum; as a result, these skills are not embedded across all areas of learning well enough
- Arrangements for sharing good practice between teachers are underdeveloped
- Arrangements for pupils to acquire an appreciation of other cultures and traditions need strengthening

## Recommendations

### The school should:

- R1 Co-ordinate the provision for skills across the school to ensure that pupils build systematically on existing knowledge and understanding
- R2 Increase opportunities for teachers to observe best practice in teaching both within the school and in other settings
- R3 Increase opportunities for pupils to understand and celebrate a wider range of cultures and traditions

### Progress in addressing recommendations from previous note of visit or inspection report

#### Recommendation 1: Comply fully with the regulations for registration

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has taken prompt action to address this recommendation and now meets fully the regulatory standards for the welfare, health and safety of pupils and the management of complaints.

The school has strengthened the arrangements for health and safety to include clear procedures for risk management and improved training for staff at all levels. The proprietor holds leaders to account for standards of health and safety through regular quality assurance visits and monthly meetings.

The school maintains an appropriate admissions register.

Leaders have reviewed the procedures for the management of complaints. The procedures now meet the relevant regulatory requirements.

#### Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of the curriculum by developing suitable schemes of work

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The curriculum policy is supported by appropriate schemes of work based closely on the requirements of accredited courses. Teachers adapt schemes of work carefully to plan learning experiences that are well matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. For example, the key stage 4 physical education scheme of work provides pupils with a choice of sports that reflects their aptitudes and interests well. Units in the mathematics scheme of work focus appropriately on developing pupils' independent living skills, such as the ability to plan and manage a budget. The personal and social, education scheme of work provides pupils with useful information on important current affairs such as democracy and parliamentary elections.

However, the majority of schemes of work do not identify opportunities for pupils to develop skills across the curriculum in enough detail.

**Recommendation 3: Ensure that literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and thinking skills are planned for across the curriculum**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The school has a detailed action plan that sets out appropriate actions, timescales and resources to improve the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum. The proprietors have provided additional equipment to improve the provision of ICT and are exploring ways of achieving reliable internet connectivity in all learning areas. Leaders have formed a useful partnership with an external agency to support teachers in planning the integration of skills into learning experiences across the curriculum. However, these arrangements are newly in place and it is too early to judge their impact on pupils' standards.

Most teachers have sole responsibility for the planning and delivery of individual subjects across the school and have started to identify opportunities to develop pupils' skills in lesson plans and schemes of work. Subject specialists plan well for the development of pupils' literacy skills in English, numeracy skills in mathematics and ICT skills in discrete ICT lessons. However, the school does not co-ordinate these skills well enough to ensure that there is coherence in pupils' experiences across all subjects and there are limited opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively. As a result, valuable opportunities to develop these skills in other subject areas are missed.

**Recommendation 4: Ensure that learners contribute to assessing and reviewing their performance and are aware of their targets for development**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school encourages pupils to take an active part in planning their own learning and has improved procedures for pupils to review their performance. These include new arrangements for pupils to set and review their learning targets for each subject in end of unit evaluations.

Nearly all pupils have responded positively to these increased opportunities for self-assessment. Their contributions demonstrate that most pupils know where they have made progress and a majority set themselves appropriately challenging targets that link well to their stated goals.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure that self-evaluation processes are comprehensive and that they draw on evidence from a wide range of stakeholders**

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Leaders have strengthened the self-evaluation process by improving procedures for consulting with a wide range of stakeholders including parents, carers, staff and pupils.

The school provides pupils with regular opportunities to share their views and raise concerns through effective arrangements for listening to learners. These include a monthly pupil forum, the use of questionnaires, and the Branas Bugle, a paper edited by the pupils.

Leaders meet with staff regularly to discuss issues of concern and have introduced a stakeholder survey that provides useful information about the quality of teaching, pupil standards and pupil wellbeing.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the main issues raised in the stakeholder surveys and have prioritised actions to address the concerns in them appropriately.

## **Compliance with the standards for registration**

### **Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school**

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 2: The spiritual, moral, social 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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 6.

### **Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled**

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

## Recommendation regarding registration

When considering this school's registration the National Assembly for Wales 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 annual monitoring inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

## School information

<b>School</b>	The Branäs School
<b>School number</b>	663/6040
<b>Purpose of visit</b>	Annual monitoring inspection
<b>Date of visit</b>	05/05/2015
<b>Proprietor</b>	Branäs Isaf Personal Development Centre
<b>Staff</b>	7 full-time teachers 2 part-time teachers 1 administrator
<b>Number of pupils</b>	17
<b>Provision</b>	Day
<b>Type of special educational need (SEN) catered for by the school</b>	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
<b>Last Section 163 inspection</b>	09/06/2014
<b>Last annual monitoring inspection</b>	25/02/2013
<b>Last CSSIW inspection</b>	

## Team information

Mr Anthony Mulcahy	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Ann Dackevych	Team Inspector