



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

**A report on
Prospects School**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About Prospects School

Prospects School opened in 1994. It is housed in a large, detached property with extensive grounds in Bersham, Wrexham. The school was acquired by its current proprietors, Keys Childcare, in March 2015. The proprietor currently operates 19 schools in the UK. Two of these are in Wales.

The school provides education for up to 20 pupils aged 11 to 16 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school provides full-time education for young people who live in the company's children's homes as well as day placements to pupils from surrounding local authorities.

The school currently has 11 pupils on roll. All pupils have statements of special educational needs or education and health care plans. Nearly all of the pupils are from English-speaking backgrounds. Many pupils have looked-after child status and the majority of pupils reside in the company's children's homes. Local authorities in England place just over half of pupils.

The headteacher has been in post since July 2016. The headteacher is supported by an education team that consists of six teachers and one learning support assistant.

The school's last full inspection was in February 2012.

Summary

The headteacher and senior leaders in the company provide strong day-to-day leadership for the school. They communicate a clear vision for the school that focuses suitably on providing a stable and nurturing environment for pupils. This helps the majority of pupils to acquire the skills they need for the next stage of their lives during their time at the school.

Teachers and learning support assistants have a strong understanding of the social and emotional needs of pupils and build positive working relationships with them. They work together well to support pupils and provide a suitable range of learning experiences that meet the needs and interests of a majority of pupils effectively. These pupils respond positively to the school's behaviour management strategies and make suitable progress in their learning. However, a minority of pupils do not engage productively in their learning. Their poor behaviour impacts negatively on their own learning and that of other pupils in the school.

The school collects a wide range of data to evaluate important aspects of pupils' wellbeing. However, the school's use of first-hand evidence to evaluate the standards of pupils' work and the progress they make in their learning is underdeveloped.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations, the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide full-time supervised education for all pupils of compulsory school age 1(2)(a)(i)

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 almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- maintain an attendance register in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 3(9)

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

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Improve the behaviour and engagement of a minority of pupils
- R3 Ensure that learning experiences meet the needs and interests of all pupils
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation processes focus on the standards of pupils' work and the progress they make over time

What happens next

Since the school does not meet 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 will 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 its current development plan to show what actions 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/carers at the school.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

During their time at the school, the majority of pupils make suitable progress in relation to their individual needs and abilities. These pupils develop successfully the confidence they need to access learning because of the beneficial support and encouragement they receive from staff. However, a minority of pupils do not make sufficient progress, as they do not engage positively with learning and waste too much time.

Pupils attending Prospects School have a wide range of educational and emotional needs. Because of this, it is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends over time. There is no notable difference between the performance of all pupils and that of boys and girls. The school has only recently begun to accept day pupils. As a result, there is not sufficient data to compare the performance of this group of pupils with those who are in the care of their local authority.

Many pupils make sound progress in developing their numeracy skills. In mathematics lessons, they carry out calculations with the four rules of number accurately and select the correct operation to solve mathematical problems. For example, they manipulate equations effectively to calculate speed, distance and time. A few pupils calculate fractions and proportions, and identify lines of symmetry successfully. A very few older pupils use trigonometry confidently to calculate the size of angles and the length of sides of a triangle.

A majority of pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a few other areas of learning. For example, they collect data and display their findings in charts and graphs when analysing the number of people who belong to the major world religions. These pupils also use their numeracy skills well in everyday, real life situations. For example, they learn to manage a budget and cost improvements to the school grounds.

Around half of pupils make suitable progress in developing their literacy skills in English lessons. They read accurately and extract information confidently from a range of texts. They demonstrate a sound understanding of what they read and can summarise the main points of a story correctly. A few pupils, who are more able, read novels and use their skills well to infer the intention of the author, the audience the book is written for and how well the author succeeds in conveying their message.

Most pupils write legibly and a majority structure their work appropriately into sentences and paragraphs. A few pupils write at length in English lessons using relevant styles and for a range of purposes. A majority of pupils use these skills suitably in other subjects such as topic work in personal and social education. However, too many pupils take little pride in the quality and neatness of their written work in subjects across the curriculum and make repeated mistakes in spelling and grammar.

Generally, only a few pupils are confident to ask questions and seek clarification when needed. These pupils speak clearly and use an appropriate range of language for their age and ability. However, generally, many pupils lack confidence in their oracy skills. This means they do not extend their ideas well enough and provide verbal responses that are too brief or superficial.

Many pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) suitably to redraft written assignments in English and to research topics in personal and social education lessons. However, most pupils do not make productive use of ICT to support their learning across the curriculum and they make limited progress in developing their skills in ICT.

Overall, pupils make strong progress when they engage in outdoor education and physical activities. Through personal and social education, pupils develop a broad range of important thinking and problem solving skills. Examples include planning projects to design the common room, arranging charity fundraising events and organising the end of year celebration. Many pupils at key stage 4 develop important social and team-working skills through taking part successfully in work experience placements at local stables, a hair salon and a garage. These skills help to prepare them well for future life.

Nearly all Year 11 pupils leave the school with an entry level qualification in mathematics and most leave with an entry level qualification in English. A very few pupils gained a GCSE in mathematics, English, art or biology. Many pupils move on to further education, training or employment when they leave the school at the end of key stage 4.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Pupils who attend Prospects School have a wide range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have experienced exclusion and breakdowns of previous placements. They arrive at the school with a history of poor attendance and have frequently missed a considerable amount of education prior to starting the school. As a result, they have little confidence in their own ability as learners and have considerable difficulties in managing their own behaviour.

During their time at the school, the majority of pupils build successful relationships with staff and build the confidence they need to access learning. Pupils with a poor record of attendance at their previous school improve their attendance significantly at the school.

Generally, pupils engage well in activities when they have the opportunity to make choices and take ownership of their learning. The majority of pupils engage well with tasks, sustain concentration and show suitable consideration of others. This helps them to make suitable progress in their learning in relation to their individual needs and abilities.

However, a minority of pupils do not co-operate consistently well with other pupils or with staff. They show little interest in their work and do not remain in class for the duration of the lesson. They do not listen well to their teachers and use inappropriate

language to others both in class and around the school. These pupils are disrespectful to staff and disrupt the learning of others. Their poor behaviour has a significant impact on their own learning and on the progress of other pupils in the school.

Many pupils know the importance of a balanced diet and physical activity in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. For example, they enjoy and engage well in a wide range of physical activities, such as climbing, fishing and archery. They work enthusiastically on drama and art projects to learn about the wider aspects of personal safety and substance misuse. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and about the risks to personal safety when using social media.

Over time, a majority of pupils develop the confidence they need to take on leadership roles within the school. For example, they take the daily assembly and organise charity fundraising events in the local community. They play an active part in the work of the school council by helping review the school's rewards policy and planning improvements to the school's facilities.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that covers the seven areas of learning as required by the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The curriculum is structured broadly around the subjects of the National Curriculum. It includes valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in additional activities, which generally meet their individual needs and interests well. For example, pupils access an outdoor education centre that enables them to take part in a beneficial range of outdoor sports and adventure activities. These experiences make a positive contribution to developing pupils' self-esteem and resilience, which over time helps to engage the majority of pupils successfully in learning. However, for a minority of pupils, learning experiences are not consistently engaging and these pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

Older pupils have worthwhile options to take part in work-related education, in areas such as construction and mechanics or stable management. This enables them to practise and develop their communication and social skills in realistic contexts outside school, and strengthens their understanding of the world of work. The curriculum has a strong focus on developing pupils' understanding of relevant social issues, such as racism, mental health awareness and homelessness. The school takes part regularly in community activities, such as fundraising and supporting the 'Bersham in Bloom' competition by designing planters and floral displays. These activities promote effectively the development of pupils' problem-solving and team-working skills.

The school has an appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects such as English and maths. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in a few other subjects. However, planning to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills progressively across the curriculum is not co-ordinated well enough. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their ICT skills in line with their abilities.

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement. Teachers and support staff work well together to create a positive learning environment and build constructive working relationships with pupils. They provide clear instructions and encourage pupils consistently to maintain their focus and do their best.

In the majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. In these lessons, teachers plan sequences of lessons carefully, based on detailed schemes of work that enable pupils to make consistent progress over time. These teachers set meaningful objectives and include interesting activities that motivate and engage pupils. They use questioning effectively to build pupils' confidence in their answers and reinforce their understanding.

In a minority of lessons, however, teaching lacks suitable challenge. Tasks do not build progressively on pupils' prior levels of attainment or focus well enough on developing pupils' skills. In these lessons, activities do not engage pupils sufficiently well and the pace of learning is too slow. As a result, a minority of pupils do not engage with their learning and their poor behaviour impacts negatively on the learning of others in the school.

In all lessons, teachers and support staff provide encouraging verbal feedback to motivate and support pupils. Teachers' written feedback focuses suitably on the effort pupils have taken to complete their work and praises what pupils have done well. However, teachers' written feedback does not identify consistently enough what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school's programme of personal and social education provides comprehensive coverage of a wide range of important and relevant social and moral issues. These include sex and relationships education, online safety, recycling and the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. The programme provides a project-based approach that enables pupils to explore these issues in small groups. This helps them to develop valuable problem solving, communication and teamwork skills. The course also provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community and support worthwhile causes through fundraising for local charities. It makes strong provision for pupils to learn about a wide range of cultural traditions. This programme is a strength of the school's work.

The school has formed effective strategic partnerships with a small range of specialist agencies, which provide valuable support for pupils' individual needs. These include a psychology service, Careers Wales and a project with a local charity to raise pupils' awareness of making healthy lifestyle choices.

The school has sound arrangements for recording and tracking important aspects of pupils' wellbeing, including behaviour and attitudes towards learning. However, the school's procedure for recording attendance does not provide a reliable measure of pupil attendance in line with Welsh Government regulations and guidance.

There is an appropriate focus in the behaviour management system on rewarding good behaviour and encouraging pupils to take responsibility for managing their emotions. The rewards system is successful in supporting a majority of pupils to

modify their behaviours. However, it is not effective in helping a minority of pupils to improve specific behaviours. As a result, these pupils become disengaged from learning and do not make the progress they might.

The school creates a detailed baseline of pupil attainment and attitudes towards learning on entry. Staff use this information well to develop suitable learning plans and to set appropriate targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development in individual education plans (IEPs). However, the school's arrangements to meet the additional literacy and numeracy needs of a very few pupils does not meet requirements and does not help these pupils to achieve the relevant IEP targets.

Generally, staff track pupil progress in achieving their personal development and numeracy targets well. However, procedures to track and monitor pupil progress in achieving their literacy targets is underdeveloped. Overall, the school does not track the progress that pupils make in subjects across the curriculum well enough.

The school provides parents and carers with regular and detailed reports of pupil progress, attitudes and attainment.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

In recent years, the school has undergone a number of changes in its staffing, leadership and ownership. Since his appointment in 2016, the headteacher has played an important role in providing effective operational leadership of the school during this period of change. Together with senior leaders in the company, he communicates a clear vision for the school that focuses suitably on providing a stable and nurturing environment that equips pupils with the skills they need to succeed during the next stage in their lives.

Regular staff meetings focus clearly on ensuring staff understand the social and emotional needs of pupils. Communication across the school is open and effective. Despite a period of recent staff instability, teachers and learning support staff understand their roles well and have worked together coherently as a team to provide support and continuity for pupils. Senior managers in the company are a visible presence in the school on a regular basis and provide valuable support to the headteacher and staff.

Leaders and managers collect a wide range of data that focuses on important aspects of pupils' wellbeing, including data on attendance and behaviour. They use this information well to inform pupils' placement plans and to provide relevant feedback on pupils' progress to local authorities and to the proprietor. The school takes good account of the views of pupils, parents and stakeholders in monitoring how well the provision meets individual pupils' needs. However, the school does not have a strategic approach to evaluating first-hand evidence at a whole school level. For example, the school's processes to evaluate the standards of pupils' work and the quality of teaching are at an early stage of development. As a result, leaders' understanding of pupils' standards and the rate of progress that pupils make is limited and does not form a sound basis for the school's improvement planning.

The school provides an appropriate programme of staff training that focuses well on developing their understanding of a wide range of issues to do with pupils' wellbeing. However, opportunities for staff to meet regularly to discuss issues associated with teaching and learning, or to observe best practice in other schools, are underdeveloped.

Until very recently the school has not had a delegated budget. This has restricted the headteacher's ability to plan strategically to make long-term improvements to the school's provision. Overall, the school provides a calm and suitably resourced learning environment that meets pupils' needs well. It deploys its resources well to source provision from external providers that enhance the range and quality of learning experiences available to pupils. This has improved opportunities for pupils to access worthwhile vocational or music courses, for example, that meet pupils' needs and interests well. However, aspects of the school's external environment are underdeveloped and resources for ICT are not sufficient to promote the development of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum.

Since his appointment, the headteacher, supported by senior leaders in the company, has taken effective action to improve aspects of the school's work. This includes improving the ethos of the school and the monitoring of pupils' use of time out rooms in the school. However, the school has made limited progress in addressing an important aspect of non-compliance identified on a previous Estyn monitoring visit. As a result, the school does not comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Copies of the report

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

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.

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses 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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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