



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

**A report on
The Potteries**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About The Potteries

The Potteries school opened in November 2012. The classroom is based in a large house in Abermule near Newtown, which is also a children's home. The Potteries is an assessment centre. Nearly all pupils attend a 26-week programme, which includes a 16-week assessment, before moving on to long-term placements.

The proprietor, CareTech UK, is a limited company, which owns children's homes across England and Wales. The children's home is registered with CCSIW for up to four young people aged 10 to 18. There are currently three pupils on roll. All are placed by and looked after by English local authorities and have education and health care plans. The primary identified need is social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school provides full-time education for all the young people placed in the children's home. Residential care workers support the headteacher on a day-to-day basis. They attend educational visits and sports activities with the pupils during the school day. A head of education oversees the education provision across the company's schools. The headteacher has been in post since 2010. This is the school's first full inspection.

Summary

The school benefits from strong leadership and a clear strategic direction. Leaders have ensured that policies and procedures to assure the quality of teaching and learning are embedded well in the day-to-day work of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to influence what they learn. The positive working relationship between staff and pupils and the consistent approach to managing behaviour impacts significantly on pupils' attendance, motivation and wellbeing. Staff know the needs and interests of the pupils well. They provide a wide range of stimulating learning experiences that help pupils to re-engage in education, make progress with their learning and make successful transitions to long-term placements.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	n/a
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	n/a
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

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 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

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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 Improve the coordination and tracking of literacy across the curriculum
- R2 Increase opportunities for staff to share and learn from good practice
- R3 Improve facilities on site for pupils to play and learn outside the classroom

What happens next

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.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on how the school's provision enables pupils to influence what they learn and re-engage successfully in education, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Judgement

Inspectors did not make a judgement for standards.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Judgement

Inspectors did not make a judgement for wellbeing.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad curriculum that meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. The curriculum focuses well on developing pupils' attitudes to learning, raising their self-esteem and preparing them for a successful transition. Pupils work closely with the headteacher to plan their timetables, which reflect their personal interests well. All pupils access core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as a range of useful accredited modules such as basic kitchen hygiene, and planning, preparing and cooking a group meal. The school also offers a wide range of educational activities such as visits to the zoological gardens in Chester and Blists Hill Victorian village. These visits enrich pupils' learning experiences well and have a positive impact on their wellbeing. There are valuable arrangements in place to ensure pupils access weekly team and individual sports activities such as football, racket sports and golf. These activities help pupils understand the importance of working as part of a team and keeping fit and healthy.

The headteacher uses the information from baseline assessments well to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of most pupils. Short-term planning identifies purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and, on occasions, in different contexts. For example, pupils use their numeracy skills well in vocational lessons to compare the prices of ingredients in local supermarkets and to test the temperature of fish towards the end of the cooking time. However, planning for pupils to write in a variety of styles and for different purposes is under developed.

Short-term planning across all subjects does not build well enough on pupils' previous learning. Lessons do not always sequence together well enough. As a result pupils do not always benefit from a cohesive learning experience

Overall, the quality of teaching is good.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' achievements in education. The headteacher and the residential care staff work together effectively to provide purposeful learning opportunities across the curriculum. They have a thorough understanding of pupils' emotional needs, their strengths and personal interests. The positive working relationship between staff and pupils and the consistent approach to managing behaviour impacts positively on pupils' attendance, motivation and wellbeing. Residential care staff play an important role in supporting pupils to re-engage with their education and in delivering the broad range of off-site vocational and recreational lessons.

Overall, staff deliver well-structured lessons, with clear learning objectives. In many lessons, staff deliver a range of interesting activities and tasks that engage pupils well and match their needs and abilities suitably. In these lessons, staff move pupils' learning forward at an appropriate pace and use questioning effectively to assess and challenge pupils' understanding. In a few lessons, staff use questioning skilfully to challenge pupils to extend their verbal responses and provide reasons and explanations for their views. However, in a few subjects, there is an over-reliance on commercial worksheets. While these provide pupils with useful initial scaffolding to re-engage in education, they also restrict pupils, particularly the more able, from developing as independent learners and achieving as well as they could.

In most lessons, staff provide valuable feedback to pupils against specific learning objectives and behaviour targets during and at the end of every lesson. This helps pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Generally, pupils engage well in this discussion and reflect suitably on their own effort and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The tracking and monitoring of pupils' behaviour and wellbeing is a strength of the school. The headteacher draws together important information from a wide range of sources that provide meaningful wellbeing targets for all pupils. Staff are familiar with these targets and use them regularly in lessons.

The school works well with a small range of highly specialist services to support pupils' wellbeing needs. For example, all pupils at the school attend a valuable weekly therapeutic assessment at another school in the organisation. The therapists liaise closely with the school and make important recommendations regarding pupils' future therapeutic needs. The headteacher incorporates these recommendations into a detailed education assessment report. This helps placing officers when making decisions about long-term placements.

The school uses a wide range of assessments to create a baseline of pupils' learning abilities. This helps the school to identify any underlying additional learning and medical needs and to provide suitable support in a timely manner. However, the setting and monitoring of specific targets for literacy and numeracy skills is at an early stage of development.

The school has effective policies and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. This supports the headteacher and residential care staff to work together well to provide a consistent approach to behaviour management. Staff manage the few incidents of challenging behaviour skilfully and successfully re-engage pupils in their learning.

Arrangements for promoting good attendance are clear and well understood by staff. For example, when pupils refuse to attend lessons, staff work sensitively with them to encourage them to attend and to re-start the day positively. As a result, the attendance of nearly all pupils improves significantly when compared to previous placements.

The school has effective arrangements to involve all pupils in decision-making about their education. For example, the headteacher and pupils discuss timetables on a Friday afternoon. This gives pupils the opportunity to influence what they learn and

share their anxieties around particular activities. This is a notable strength of the school.

The personal and social education curriculum has relevant overarching themes, such as healthy lifestyles, keeping safe and rights and responsibilities. These lessons are highly personalised and link well to pupils' targets. External agencies, such as health professionals, work closely with the school to deliver highly specialised sessions that support pupils' personal development.

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

Leadership and management: Good

Staff and pupils at The Potteries benefit highly from strong leadership. Senior leaders have created an inclusive ethos and communicate a clear strategic vision for the school based on providing a safe learning environment where pupils can re-engage with education, build respectful relationships and develop the confidence and skills they need to make successful transitions. Staff at all levels support this vision well and work together effectively to meet pupils' social, emotional and learning needs. As a result, the vision permeates all aspects of the work of the school.

A strong feature of the school is the highly effective teamwork between the residential care staff and the headteacher. There is a useful programme of staff meetings to ensure that communication about pupils' learning, behaviour and care is effective. The headteacher provides valuable training for the residential care team to include education targets in a wide range of community-based activities. This ensures that these activities have a clear educational purpose and measurable learning outcomes. Staff value highly this training and the opportunity it provides to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, these well-planned and skilfully delivered learning activities extend learning beyond the classroom and make a positive contribution to pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders liaise well with the proprietor's head of education. Together, they have put in place a robust framework to assure the quality of the education provided by the school. This framework draws on a wide range of first-hand evidence collected regularly throughout the year, including feedback from pupils, staff and placing officers. Senior leaders use the outcomes of lesson observations and the scrutiny of documentation well to identify suitable targets for improvement. As a result, leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well. The school has a proven track-record in addressing recommendations from Estyn monitoring visits and in securing improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

The headteacher has developed useful partnerships with senior leaders in other schools to observe and share good practice. This has helped to shape improvements to the curriculum, the allocation of residential care staff to learning activities and procedures for tracking pupil progress. However, opportunities for staff who deliver learning experiences to observe and share good practice are underdeveloped.

The classroom is appropriately equipped and resourced to deliver the curriculum. The school uses facilities in the community well to extend and enhance pupils' learning experiences. However, the school does not make effective use of its grounds to enrich pupils' leisure and learning experiences.

The school meets all of the requirements of the Independent School Standards Wales Regulations (Wales) 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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