



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

A report on
Genus Education

Date of inspection: September 2023

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for
Education**

and Training in Wales

About Genus Education

Name of provider	Genus Education
Proprietor	Genus Care Limited, a company which currently operates seven children's homes across South Wales.
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent school with provision for additional learning needs
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	6
Pupils of statutory school age	6
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2016
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023
<p>Genus Education was established in February 2010 as an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is administered by Genus Care Limited which currently operates seven children's homes across South Wales. Genus Education provides education for children resident in the company's children's homes who are not able to access mainstream education. Currently, the school is registered for up to ten pupils between the ages of seven to eighteen years. There are currently six pupils on roll, around half of whom have a statement of special educational needs. All pupils are placed by local authorities in Wales. The head of education has been in post since 2019 and oversees education across the school sites. He is supported by a team of three teachers and care staff who are based in the residential homes. The last full inspection by Estyn was in February 2016. The last monitoring visit was in September 2022.</p>	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Genus Education is a caring community that provides highly effective support to develop pupils' self-confidence and well-being. Teachers build very strong working relationships with pupils and, as a result, nearly all pupils settle quickly into school and engage purposefully in their learning.

Pupils feel safe and enjoy going to school. Nearly all pupils arrive at school promptly, ready to learn. They develop highly positive attitudes towards their learning and make secure progress in their learning from their initial starting points. Around half of pupils have transitioned on to mainstream school or further education within the last three years. This is a strength of the school.

Overall, teachers develop curriculum plans that support pupils well to develop the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their next stage of education. This curriculum offer is enriched with a range of engaging activities outside of the classroom, for example through visits to museums, castles or fencing sessions. However, in a few areas, such as science, the curriculum lacks rigour.

Teachers gather a range of useful information to evaluate pupil progress. Systems in relation to monitoring the progress pupils make in their learning are newly established and it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

Teachers know their pupils very well and generally plan lessons which ensure that pupils make secure progress in their understanding and skills. However, in a few lessons, learning is constrained by an overreliance on worksheets, which are not matched well enough to the needs of pupils.

School leaders have developed a clear vision, which is shared effectively with staff and guides the work of the school. They have developed worthwhile relationships with partners and their close working relationships with the residential team support pupils' learning successfully.

The headteacher has developed a suitable range of quality assurance activities as well as policies to guide the work of the school. However, these systems do not consistently identify areas for improvement or the impact that teaching has on learning.

Staff benefit from a range of beneficial professional learning opportunities, which strengthen their practice in supporting pupils' emotional and educational needs. However, opportunities for staff to share good practice internally and externally are underdeveloped.

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 Strengthen quality assurance processes so that they focus on the impact of teaching on learning
- R2 Ensure that teachers make greater use of the outcomes of assessment processes to plan activities that move pupils forward in their learning
- R3 Improve opportunities for teachers to share best practice both internally and externally

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 its work in relation to its 'finding my element' initiative, which provides pupils with opportunities to engage in new and exciting activities to build resilience and self-confidence, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Nearly all pupils at Genus Education make good progress due to the strong support and encouragement they receive from staff. The warm and nurturing school culture positively supports pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum. In relation to their individual starting points, nearly all pupils meet their personal targets and make assured progress towards fulfilling their potential.

Nearly all pupils develop their oracy and listening skills in line with their ability. They listen well in class and follow instructions readily. For example, pupils can recall and recount confidently what was included in a recent news programme and discuss their opinions with others.

Overall, nearly all pupils are confident in communicating with staff and visitors to the school. They take turns and display patience when waiting to speak to the teacher in class.

Nearly all pupils develop appropriate reading skills. This ranges from identifying phonic sounds and letters, locating information from short reading texts to independently selecting books, for example the 'Enchanting Tales' series by Enid Blyton or 'Jump' by J.G. Nolan. The most able pupils read aloud with confidence and show a good level of fluency and understanding of what they are reading.

Nearly all pupils at the school develop their writing skills appropriately. Over time, they improve their letter formation and legibility, they spell words correctly and write short sentences successfully. Many pupils develop an awareness of writing for different purposes. For example, pupils regularly complete targeted pieces of extended writing in literacy lessons.

Nearly all pupils develop secure number skills over time and, where appropriate, relate these to real life contexts, for example measuring the weight of an apple or telling the time from an analogue clock.

Nearly all pupils apply their digital skills appropriately when given opportunities to do so. For example, they use technology to type basic sentences, research facts about

films linked to their writing tasks or select songs on relevant software to play along on a piano. In addition, many pupils use their digital skills creatively within art lessons. For example, they identify the skills needed to create art, such as how to select colours from a wheel, choose the appropriate brush size or select the shade of colours.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills suitably through a wide range of valuable activities such as rugby, paddleboarding or table tennis. They improve their fine motor skills suitably through activities such as using an electronic pen to carefully edit a digital image of World War Two bombers appearing to arrive over the school grounds.

Over time, nearly all pupils develop useful independence skills. For example, pupils can make a tasty bowl of cawl or develop the skills they need to stay safe in the community.

Across the school, pupils develop a basic understanding of Welsh language. For example, many pupils regularly write the date and record their behaviour scores in Welsh.

Many pupils benefit from opportunities to access entry level qualifications in a range of areas including preparation for work, numeracy and literacy. This prepares pupils well and raises their aspirations as they progress through the school. In addition, where appropriate, a few older pupils over recent years have achieved a BTEC qualification in personal growth and well-being.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance trends of groups over time because of the nature of the pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs.

Over the past three years, around half of the pupils leaving Genus Education transitioned successfully to a mainstream school or to a further education institution.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Genus Education is a happy school, where pupils are polite and welcoming. Nearly all pupils arrive at school well-presented and ready to learn. They develop a strong sense of pride and belonging.

Pupils feel safe and secure in their learning environment. They hold positive attitudes to learning and their whole school experience. Nearly all pupils like school and enjoy attending. They feel safe and know who to speak to if they are worried.

Attendance is very good and during the last academic year was higher than the national average for Wales. Pupils are keen to attend school and engage with the learning provided by their teachers. This is a significant achievement as nearly all pupils arrive with historically low school attendance.

Pupils form positive, trusting and meaningful relationships with their teachers. This is a strong feature of the school. As a result, they develop highly positive attitudes to learning. Nearly all engage keenly, maintaining good levels of perseverance, focus

and interest in their learning activities. Nearly all pupils wait patiently, take turns and work independently.

Nearly all pupils are keen to demonstrate their abilities and successes with enthusiasm. Pupils willingly share their work with visitors. They explain what they have learnt about over time with pride. Pupils express their individual thoughts and ideas clearly. For example, during a history lesson where pupils draw comparisons with the Victorian era and modern times.

Pupils learn about the world around them. For example, by watching daily news reports as part of their morning routine. As a result, pupils talk with understanding about current events and ethical dilemmas. Such as in discussions about the fur trade and how this can affect endangered animals in the wild.

All pupils take part in regular physical exercise such as the daily mile, gym routines or swimming. They develop and understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles. For example, they plan and prepare healthy meals in their cookery lessons.

Nearly all pupils are ready to take on roles and responsibilities as part of the school community. For example, they take advantage of the opportunity to look after class pets and plants and take pride in their school environment. Pupils engage well with and enjoy a range of popular after school clubs such as debate club.

Over time, pupils develop positive behaviours and social skills, for example when working towards class rewards at the end of each lesson. Pupils engage with this system consistently and learn to reflect on their own behaviour. They are able to confidently overcome issues around managing their feelings and behaviours as well as developing effective self-regulation techniques.

Pupils engage excitedly with the school's 'finding my element' program. They enjoy participating in a range of new and engaging activities with the aim of finding new passions. This positively contributes to the development of their self-esteem, worth and confidence. Pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their creativity well across the curriculum and through extracurricular activities. For example, they develop innovative ideas when writing stories about a haunted house or try new activities such as pottery making.

Teaching and learning experiences

Genus Education offers a broad curriculum, which appropriately reflects its aim of supporting pupils to reintegrate into mainstream education. A purposeful focus on literacy, numeracy and well-being positively supports pupils to develop skills and knowledge, engage in their learning and prepare them for their next stages in education.

Curriculum plans demonstrate appropriate coverage of the areas of learning required in the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. However, a few aspects of the curriculum, such as science, lack rigour and regularity.

Teachers use a comprehensive range of activities to support the curriculum and enrich learning opportunities. These include the 'daily mile', visits to local museums and trips to the beach to investigate geological processes. In addition, the school has

an 'it's our world' policy, which supports pupils to actively engage in the world, global religions and different cultures. The 'finding my element' initiative is very successful in supporting pupils to explore new activities, sports, hobbies and arts. This positively enriches their personal development.

The school curriculum beneficially supports the development of pupil well-being. Personal and social education (PSE) and well-being provision is a strength of the school. This allows pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and to keep themselves safe. Strong links with the residential setting further strengthen the provision in this area.

Across the school, staff are employed skilfully, to support pupils' progress and well-being. Nearly all staff work effectively to support pupils and establish highly positive and valuable relationships. Where practice is most effective, they liaise well with the class teacher, offer discreet guidance to pupils, model best practice and ensure suitable praise for good effort and positive engagement.

Teachers manage their classrooms very well and create positive and productive learning environments. They have well-established routines and consistently reinforced high expectations for how pupils should behave in lessons and around the school. Teachers are positive role models for pupils.

The beneficial communication and interaction between care and teaching staff strongly supports pupils' well-being and strong progress during their time at the school. For example, homework tasks are clearly communicated between the school and the residential home and all staff place a high importance on the value of activities such as regular independent reading.

Since the last visit, leaders have made beneficial changes to assessment methods across the school. For example, they have introduced an electronic framework to record pupil progress in specific skills as well as using progression steps. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these assessments on teaching and learning.

Where teaching is most successful, teachers are effective in ensuring that pupils make secure progress in their understanding and skills. In these lessons, the pace is purposeful and the learning. Where lessons are less successful, teachers rely too heavily on worksheets and learning activities do not always place sufficient demand on the more able pupils. This constrains the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, such as writing freely and at length in their work across the curriculum.

Across the school, the quality of teachers' verbal feedback is strong. Teachers and pupils have regular, beneficial conversations which support them in understanding how to progress in their learning. The school has a helpful marking policy to ensure pupils have a clear understanding of the progress they are making and their next steps. However, this policy is not consistently followed across the school. In a minority of cases, written feedback does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Reports to parents are clear and informative giving information about pupils' learning, behaviour and targets for the future.

Care, support and guidance

Genus Education is a caring community that encourages pupils to develop resilience, confidence and self-esteem. The high levels of care and support provided ensure that pupils feel safe and nearly always attend school.

Staff plan carefully for positive transition when pupils join the school. This transition focusses on securing a positive relationship based on mutual trust and respect. As a result, pupils settle quickly into the school, often following periods of significant disruption to their education in previous placements. This is a strength of the school.

Staff develop a comprehensive understanding of the social and emotional needs of their pupils. Where required, leaders seek specialist advice and guidance to meet these needs. The school develops a range of helpful documentation to support staff, such as individual risk assessments and behaviour plans. Staff use this knowledge effectively to provide skilful support to pupils. As a result, pupils engage fully in their education with increasing levels of independence.

Teachers carefully track a range of important information about pupils to ensure that they continue to engage positively with education. For example, staff maintain comprehensive records regarding behaviour, attendance, engagement in lessons, after-school clubs and homework completion. Teachers use this information effectively to address any issues. As a result, pupils show a strong improvement in overall engagement with school over time. Teachers set targets in relation to engagement, behaviour, independence and relationships to ensure that pupils understand their next steps in these important areas. The quality of these targets is too variable and this limits pupils' ability to understand their own targets and staff's ability to track their progress well-enough.

A notable feature of the school is its provision for reintegrating pupils into mainstream education. Leaders have clear criteria for reintegration and develop detailed individual plans which consider important factors, such as social needs, building relationships and additional learning support. As a result, around half of pupils over the last three years successfully returned to mainstream or further education.

The school has made recent changes to their processes and staffing arrangements to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), particularly those with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or individual development plan (IDP). For example, the school has recently appointed an additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) and made changes to individual education plans. These changes are in the early stages of implementation and it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

The school encourages pupils to become engaged in current events and their local community. For example, pupils collaborate to raise money for local charities. The school recently participated in 'tea at the top', where pupils and staff worked together to carry catering equipment and furniture to the top of Pen y Fan for afternoon tea. These initiatives support pupils to develop as compassionate and engaged citizens.

Teachers have high expectations for pupils and encourage them to take on responsibilities. For example, pupils maintain the class aquarium and care for the fish. Further, teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to the

school, for example leaders seek their views when conducting lesson observations. Teachers celebrate pupil successes with pride, such as at annual awards ceremonies and sports days. Pupils value these opportunities to celebrate their achievements and build their self-confidence.

There is a secure culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff at all levels are alert to the signs of possible abuse and neglect. Leaders have established an ethos where pupils feel safe and are listened to. All staff undertake regular beneficial training to keep pupils safe. The school has sound safer recruitment procedures.

Leadership and management

Leaders at Genus Education have a clear vision, which guides the work of the school. They aim to create a positive and nurturing environment where every pupil can thrive and fulfil their potential. Further, this vision extends to the school curriculum, which leaders developed with the aim of providing pupils valuable opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge needed to transition to mainstream settings or further education. This pupil-centred ethos permeates through all aspects of the school.

Directors provide helpful support and challenge to the headteacher to move the school forward and demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Further, they promote the school's safeguarding culture well and have a strong understanding of their role in this area.

The headteacher has established a suitable range of quality assurance activities to evaluate the work of the school. They provide a useful overview of key events over the year. This includes a programme of lesson observations, assessment periods, pupil progress meetings, planned professional learning and regular reports to parents and carers. Leaders promote their high expectations of staff and pupils through these quality assurance activities, for example in relation to pupil uniform, engagement and the learning environment. However, these activities do not focus well enough on the impact that teaching has on learning. Therefore, leaders do not develop an understanding of pupil learning well-enough.

Leaders have developed a range of helpful policies to guide the work of the school and ensure that these policies are read and understood by teachers. However, in a few areas, practice observed at the school does not match guidance within these policies. Further, these discrepancies have not consistently been identified through the school's quality assurance processes.

Leaders promote and support the professional learning of all staff particularly well. Teachers benefit from a wide range of professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of their pupils as well as to improve their classroom practice. For example, they receive extensive training on meeting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. Teachers value opportunities to request training to meet their individual needs. For example, through books on best practice from the company lending-library, or through recent training to improve extended writing. Leaders evaluate the impact of this professional learning on staff knowledge and confidence. They use this information successfully to plan for future professional learning opportunities.

The school promotes staff collaboration to share best practice. For example, teachers make links with their peers within the school to develop their knowledge and understanding in areas of teaching, such as phonics. However, these links are not regularly planned for and teachers do not benefit from opportunities to share best practice outside of the school.

Leaders make a significant investment in the education provision within the organisation. There are high levels of qualified teachers across the sites. Further, each classroom is bright and welcoming, well-maintained and well-resourced. A few issues relating to the premises were raised with the school and these were addressed during the inspection. A notable feature of the school is that leaders make decisions about the organisation of provision that best suit the evolving needs of the pupils.

Leaders have beneficial processes to communicate with partners, such as parents, carers and local authorities. Partners value regular reports to update them on pupil progress. The strong partnership working between education and residential teams is a strength of the provision. As a result, staff and pupils demonstrate a strong and consistent understanding of the expectations of school and pupil progress in engagement and behaviour.

Leaders have high expectations of staff and have developed a highly committed and dedicated staff team. There are comprehensive performance management procedures in place to ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Leaders provide all staff with a helpful handbook to support them to fulfil their role effectively.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([Estyn Website](#))

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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