



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

A report on

ACT Schools

Date of inspection: December 2018

by

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

About ACT Schools

ACT Schools is an independent special day school with campuses in Cardiff and Caerphilly. It provides education for pupils aged 11 to 16 years who have special educational needs specific to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The school is administered by ACT (Holdings) Ltd, a subsidiary of Cardiff and The Vale College.

There are currently 84 pupils on roll at the school. About 19% of pupils are looked-after by their local authority, and 21% have a statement of special educational needs.

This is the school's first annual monitoring visit since it opened in April 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

Staff at the school know their pupils extremely well and they provide them with valuable support in and beyond the classroom. Over time, most pupils develop strong trust in the staff, which helps them to engage positively with their learning, develop confidence in their ability and make suitable progress. During lessons, most pupils respond favourably to classroom routines, they settle quickly to introductory tasks and maintain their concentration. They behave well and show respect for each other and staff, and they collaborate effectively when working in pairs or small groups.

Since the school opened, senior leaders and staff have worked together closely to share best practice for curriculum planning, writing schemes of work and lesson planning. Lesson plans are now routinely shared across the campuses, including weekly and shorter term plans. Staff access to the plans is useful for them to identify and discuss best practice, which is leading to stronger planning across the school and reducing inconsistencies in this area.

Senior leaders provide clear direction for improving provision and outcomes for pupils. For example, in addition to improvements in planning, the school is piloting a peer observation programme to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning. This programme enables staff to work jointly with professional learning partners to reflect on teaching and learning models from high achieving schools and to relate this to their own practice. The school has also appointed a 'Welsh Champion' to strengthen the arrangements for developing pupils' Welsh language skills.

The school is developing strong and beneficial partnerships with many local authorities who fund learners at the school. These partnership arrangements include monthly progress meetings with senior leaders from the school and lead officers from the local authority. The meetings monitor pupil progress robustly and, where appropriate, agree actions for follow-up. These actions can include, for example, accessing the authority's specialist services such as the educational psychology or specialist teacher teams to meet the needs of pupils better.

Areas for development

Overall, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are at an early stage of development and require strengthening in several areas. These areas include, for example, data not being used well enough to evaluate performance and targets for improvement that are not precise enough or measurable.

The role of teaching assistants is underdeveloped, which the school has already identified as part of its improvement planning.

Recommendations

The school should:

R1. Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning

R2. Further develop and make best use of teaching assistants

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, 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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 7.

Recommendation regarding registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government 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 limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

Copies of the report

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

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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