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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Brynlliwarch Hall School
Kerry
Nr Newtown
Powys
SY16 4PB**

Date of inspection: June 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Brynllwarch Hall School is a special school situated in the rural village of Kerry, near Newtown in Powys. The school provides education for pupils from 8 to 19 years of age with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and additional learning needs.

The school opened as a residential school in 1951 but ceased to provide residential provision in 2011. The school uses some of the residential areas as a 6th form block, a music block with a recording studio and a construction workshop. Within the grounds there are two Forest Schools, a horticulture area and a range of play areas.

At the time of the inspection the school educated 67 pupils, 59 boys and eight girls. Of these, five pupils were in key stage 2, 26 pupils in key stage 3, 19 pupils in key stage 4 and 17 were post-16 pupils.

Pupils come from across Powys but predominantly from north Powys. Sixty-one pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Fourteen per cent of the pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 have 'looked-after child' status. All pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language and 37% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The school's motto is 'learning and succeeding together' and their aim is to meet the ever changing needs of the pupils.

The school was last inspected in June 2006.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Brynlllywarch Hall is a good school because:

- leaders and managers have high expectations and ensure that the school functions effectively;
- pupils achieve good standards in their learning and develop the social and communication skills that they need;
- in many lessons teaching is good and in a few cases excellent;
- pupils behave and attend well;
- pupils have good care, support and guidance;
- leaders monitor staff performance carefully; and
- the school has strong partnerships.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Brynlllywarch Hall School are good because:

- the headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff;
- the newly established leadership team is focused on school improvement;
- staff work very effectively as a team and have high expectations of the pupils;
- self-evaluation is well embedded and enables the school to identify clear and appropriate areas for improvement;
- staff performance is managed very carefully; and
- the school manages its resources well and provides good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- R1 ensure that marking always helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work;
- R2 strengthen the role of the governing body in challenging the work of the school;
- R3 increase the opportunities for staff to identify and share good practice across the school; and
- R4 work with mainstream partners to provide opportunities for Brynllwarch pupils to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Across the school, pupils achieve good standards in relation to their learning needs and abilities. They make good progress in achieving the agreed learning targets identified in their individual education plans (IEPs). Pupils recognise this good progress and understand exactly how well they are doing in meeting their targets.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance of trends over time due to the wide range of pupils' special educational needs.

There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, those pupils who are 'looked after' by a local authority, or those who receive free school meals.

Pupils gain a wide range of appropriate accredited qualifications. These include GCSEs in mathematics and art and design, Edexcel BTEC awards in sport, construction and home cooking skills, the ASDAN bronze award, and WJEC Essential Skills Wales qualifications in communication and the application of number. Last year nearly all pupils moved on to college or gained employment.

Pupils improve their reading and writing skills well over time. Many pupils make very good progress with their reading and read clearly with good understanding. They make good use of the visiting library to borrow books and read for pleasure. Pupils use and understand a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary, for example in science and mathematics. More able pupils in key stage 3, 4 and 5 write extended pieces of work. Pupils make good progress with their communication skills. They speak confidently and interact well with each other and with adults in small group and whole class situations. They listen very well to staff and to each other and are keen to take part in discussions.

Pupils apply their developing numeracy skills well to interpret graphs, plan work schedules and work out the best bargains at the garden centre. They use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to present their work, research the internet and handle data. They develop their thinking skills well. They use these skills to plan strategies for working together in teams, to recall and make use of previous knowledge and to explain how they reach their answers.

Most pupils learn to manage their behaviour well. They are highly motivated by the use of a computer programme to track their progress and a wide range of appropriate rewards.

Older pupils gain a clear understanding of the world of work in a wide range of work placements. These include garages, hairdressing salons and restaurants. They reflect on these experiences in school and take part in mock interviews. They make very good use of the recently introduced vocational areas to gain important skills and experience in construction, horticulture and forestry.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their Welsh language skills. They make effective use of everyday greetings in the appropriate context.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils are keen to learn and to improve their behaviour. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of learning activities.

Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of personal hygiene and healthy eating. Taking part in physical activities increases their confidence and improves their fitness levels. These physical activities include sailing, horse riding and athletics. Boys particularly enjoy the opportunity to take part in dance sessions.

Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they value the support and advice provided by staff. They gain a good understanding of personal and social issues including internet safety, sexual health and substance misuse.

Most pupils attend well and arrive punctually. This is a major achievement for a few pupils who have previously not attended well.

Nearly all pupils make very good progress in their personal, social and moral development. During their time at the school they learn to value themselves and others. They develop positive attitudes towards their work and the social skills that they need to live and work in the community.

Due to the very good support that they receive, most pupils improve their behaviour over time. They learn to control their anger and remain calm. As a result they reduce the amount of time that they are off task.

Pupils value their work on the school council. They feel listened to and make important decisions about the life and work of the school. This includes making efficiency savings in the use of water and influencing the setting up of the new gym.

Pupils gain a very good understanding of community life. They serve the local community very well. They entertain senior citizens, take care of the local church and raise funds for a local hospice.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum across all key stages, which meets the needs of all pupils.

The school has recently prioritised the development of skills provision across the curriculum. Staff have received training and have audited the skills that pupils have developed in their subjects. However, staff do not yet plan for the progression of skills consistently across the school.

Pupils in key stage 4 and at post-16 follow individual learning pathways. These provide appropriate access to a wide range of accredited courses and a good range of informal enriching activities within the school and the wider community.

Outdoor pursuit activities successfully encourage aspects of leadership and responsibility. These include horse riding, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the annual residential canoeing activity.

There are extensive links with local businesses and employers that enable effective provision for pupils to prepare for the world of work.

The school promotes Welsh language development well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to use incidental Welsh. The Welsh dimension is included effectively across all areas of curricular planning.

Provision to develop aspects of sustainable development is good. The eco-committee members show a good understanding of their responsibilities. Pupils have valuable opportunities to develop a greater awareness of conservation. These include creating a pond area and tree planting in the community.

There is good provision to develop pupils' understanding of their role as global citizens, such as sponsorship of a child through an international charity and links with schools in Tanzania and Malawi.

Teaching: Good

All staff relate very well to pupils. Teaching assistants are fully involved and provide valuable support in lessons.

Teaching in many lessons is good and, in a few cases, excellent. In these lessons, staff have high expectations for behaviour and make sure that they provide a variety of strategies so that pupils remain focused on their tasks. They ensure that pupils understand the purpose of lessons and what they should achieve in them. They match the work carefully to pupils' individual needs and abilities. They use a wide range of resources including interactive whiteboards to hold pupils' interest. They work at a brisk pace and frequently change activities during the session. On the few occasions where pupils do not manage their behaviour well, staff deal with these incidents effectively and promptly. As a result, pupils settle and return to their work quickly.

Where teaching is adequate, there is an over reliance on the use of work sheets and lessons are not planned well enough to meet the needs of individuals. Behaviour is not managed effectively. The pace of lessons is too slow and pupils spend too much time on low level tasks.

All teachers keep regular records on pupils' progress. They analyse data well against individual targets and this information is used effectively towards future planning. Annual reports to parents give a clear picture of their children's development and achievement.

Verbal and electronic feedback gives pupils a good understanding of how well they do in lessons. Their behaviour is carefully recorded and pupils are fully involved in setting targets for improving their behaviour and academic work. However, marking of pupils' work does not always provide sufficient information on how to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. There are effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. The school successfully promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and there are good opportunities for personal reflection.

The school has effective systems to record, monitor and set targets for pupils' behaviour. Staff help pupils to understand and respect the needs of others and to take more responsibility for their own actions. They encourage pupils to make positive choices, become more aware of the consequences of their behaviour and know the difference between right and wrong.

Staff have set aside an area of the school where pupils in need of extra support can receive targeted individualised help. Pupils are referred by staff and the support is planned well to meet individual needs. This support includes talking through their concerns and working on strategies to reduce their anxiety. As a result, pupils begin to understand and improve their behaviour so that they can re-join their peers in the classroom. Pupils who do not manage their behaviour well also receive targeted support from a cognitive behavioural therapist. The police liaison officer actively supports individuals and groups of pupils, helping them make informed choices regarding behaviour.

The school works well with a wide range of external agencies to make sure that pupils receive the help that they need to deal with particular issues that concern them. These agencies include the educational psychology service and the Powys youth offending service. The school makes good use of its learning coach to provide impartial advice and guidance to pupils.

There is an appropriate personal and social education programme, which includes good quality sex education.

Staff emphasise the importance of regular attendance and the school has effective strategies in place to monitor and improve attendance. Most pupils attend well and attendance levels are significantly higher for a few pupils than they were in their previous schools.

The school makes sure that pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and meets its statutory duties. Pupils are fully involved in the setting of their targets in their IEPs and the assessment of their progress.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school promotes equality well. Pupils' achievement is celebrated. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos and the school lives by its motto 'learning and succeeding together'.

The school takes good account of pupils' backgrounds to make sure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and opportunities to succeed in all aspects of school life.

Accommodation and grounds are of a high standard and are well maintained. Specialist areas, such as the music block and construction workshop, are particularly good features.

Displays in classrooms and around the school are attractive, well presented and informative. They celebrate pupils' achievement, stimulate their interest and enhance learning.

Learning resources are of a high quality and meet pupils' individual needs well. ICT equipment is good.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff. Members of the new senior leadership team have established a strong sense of purpose and values within the school and are effectively moving the school forward. Together, they have created an inclusive school ethos in which pupils make good progress and staff and pupils feel valued.

Senior leaders and middle leaders have clear roles and responsibilities, which focus appropriately on school improvement targets. The school's plans and policies focus well on meeting pupils' needs. Staff work well as a team and communication throughout the school is a strong feature.

The governing body shares the school's vision and is very supportive of the school. It meets regularly and has appropriate sub-committees in place. Governors regularly visit classes and the school council as part of their role. The governing body monitors the school's performance but does not yet fully challenge and hold the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves.

Staff performance is monitored regularly, and evaluated through an inclusive and secure performance management and appraisal system. Leaders set helpful written targets for improvements. However, the opportunities for peer observation and sharing good practice within the school are not well developed.

Leaders use the performance management and appraisal procedures effectively to identify whole school training and development needs. As a result, the school is able to meet the changing individual needs of the pupils. Several staff provide valuable outreach training and support for mainstream and special schools.

All staff contribute well to school planning and improvement and the school meets both local and national priorities effectively. This includes the School Effectiveness Framework agenda.

Improving quality: Good

The process of self-evaluation is well embedded in the school. All staff and pupils contribute effectively to the process and the self-evaluation report is based on first hand evidence and a good range of data. The school seeks and values the views of parents and an appropriate range of stakeholders. However, these views are not fully incorporated into the self-evaluation report.

As a result of the self-evaluation processes, leaders can clearly identify the school's strengths and the areas for improvement. The school has produced a detailed school improvement plan linked to the self-evaluation report.

The school has effective systems in place for managing performance. There are well-established procedures for regular classroom observations by managers, which provide teachers with valuable written feedback and actions for improvements.

Outcomes from performance management are used well to identify further areas for development and training for school staff. All staff have access to a wide range of courses, which impacts positively on improving standards of individual pupils and groups of pupils.

The school is continuously developing and using a wide range of data to monitor the progress of individual pupils over time. This is used well to inform school improvement and improve pupil outcomes.

The school has established effective networks of professional practice with other special schools, mainstream schools and partners. Their commitment and involvement with an extensive range of partners are having a very positive impact on the wellbeing and outcomes for pupils. An example of this is in the improvement of literacy skills, specifically reading, of pupils.

The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has set up strong partnerships with the community, local schools and external agencies. These partnerships are having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and standards.

The school works very closely with parents and carers and gives them valuable support. Parents and carers receive useful advice on issues that concern them. These include how to be more effective in managing their child's behaviour, the importance of healthy eating and sign-posting to support agencies.

Parents and carers receive regular feedback from staff about their child's work and behaviour. The home/school diaries outline daily progress, although these reports do not always contain enough detail.

The headteacher works well with other senior leaders to share good practice and improve teaching and learning for vulnerable pupils in the local area. The assistant headteacher has set up valuable links with other schools to improve the development of pupils' literacy skills.

Brynllwarch provides valuable support to local mainstream schools and the pupil referral unit in the effective management of pupil behaviour. Also, pupils from mainstream schools make very good use of the special school's facilities such as the vocational areas and the grounds. However, Brynllwarch school pupils do not have the opportunity to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of experienced, specialist teachers and other staff who are deployed effectively to meet the individual needs of the pupils.

Staff have appropriate planning, preparation and assessment time. This enables staff to be effective in ensuring that the pupils are provided with a wide variety of personal and learning experiences. High quality resources are available and used appropriately to match the interests and abilities of all pupils.

Areas of the school, such as the 6th form block and the construction workshop, have been successfully designed to ensure that they meet the needs of older pupils. This was achieved by involving pupils in the design process.

The school makes good use of the extensive school grounds and buildings to support the curriculum.

The school's financial management is efficient and effective. In view of the good standards achieved by the pupils, the effective teaching and careful management of resources, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Nineteen parents responded to the questionnaire and all agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the school and that the school is well run. Almost all agree that their child likes and feels safe in school and was helped to settle well when they started at the school. Nearly all agree that their child is making good progress and that that staff expect their child to work hard. All parents agree that they are comfortable about approaching the school and understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. All agree or strongly agree that teaching is good and that staff treat pupils with respect. They all agree that their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise. Almost all agree that the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility and the school offers a good range of activities including trips and visits. The majority of parents feel that pupils behave well in school and that the school prepares their child well for moving on to college or work.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-eight pupils responded to the questionnaire and, overall, are very positive about their school. Nearly all pupils agree that they feel safe in the school, that the school deals well with bullying and that they have someone to talk to if they are worried. Almost all pupils agree that the school teaches them to be healthy and encourages them to take regular exercise. Nearly all pupils agree that the school helps them to learn and make progress and most feel that they are doing well in school. They all agree that they have enough books and equipment and that the school listens to their views and make the changes they suggest. Nearly all agree that staff treat them fairly and with respect, help them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds, and prepare them well for college or work. A few pupils do not feel that pupils behave well so that they can get their work done.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Meinir Rees	Reporting Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
William Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Peter Owen	Peer Inspector
Fiona Lewis	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

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.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment