



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

A report on
Options Kinsale School

Date of inspection: September 2018

by

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

About Options Kinsale School

Options Kinsale School opened in 2007. The school is part of the Outcomes First group which seeks to provide integrated education and residential services for young people and adults with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), moderate and severe learning difficulties, and social and emotional difficulties.

Options Kinsale School offers residential education and care for up to 25 pupils aged between 8 and 19 years who have complex needs and a diagnosis of ASD. The school currently has 24 pupils on roll. The majority are placed by local authorities in England. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Most pupils have looked-after child (LAC) status and many reside in the company's children's homes. Most pupils are from English-speaking backgrounds.

The headteacher has been in post since November 2016. The headteacher is supported by an education team that consists of a deputy headteacher, six class teachers, two part-time tutors and eight learning support assistants. The education team is supported by a clinical team that includes an occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, psychologist and art therapist.

The school's last full inspection was in 2012.

Summary

The school provides a nurturing and caring environment that supports the complex needs of its pupils well. Staff from the education, residential and clinical teams work together effectively to ensure there are consistent approaches to support pupils in school and in their daily life. Due to this well co-ordinated support, many pupils improve their wellbeing and make strong progress in their learning during their time at the school.

The school provides a suitable variety of learning experiences that generally meet the diverse needs and abilities of its pupils successfully. These include many opportunities for pupils to access outdoor learning in the community that help pupils to build their confidence and physical health. However, the school lacks a strategic approach to personal and social education, and systems to track pupils' progress in their wider skills are underdeveloped.

After a period of instability in the school's leadership, the school has a settled leadership team. Leaders communicate a clear vision for the school and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have made beneficial changes to strengthen the school's provision. However, many of these actions are at an early stage of development and it is too early to evaluate their impact.

The school does not meet all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
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:

- Ensure the curriculum policy is supported by effective schemes of work, and implement them effectively 1(2)
- Ensure that the school provides personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos 1(2)(f)

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 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Implement effective systems to track pupils' progress in learning across a wider range of skills
- R3 Improve the quality of teachers' long-term planning across the curriculum
- R4 Ensure that learning support staff have the training and skills they need to fulfil their roles effectively
- R5 Strengthen processes for quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement planning

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: Good

All pupils who attend Options Kinsale School have a range of complex needs, varying degrees of challenging behaviour and many are on the autism spectrum. Due to the complexity of their needs, pupils' attainment and achievement are judged on an individual pupil basis. It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to compare the performance of different groups of learners.

Most pupils make effective progress in relation to their individual starting points in a suitable range of skills. Many pupils develop their communication skills well. For example, non-verbal pupils make strong progress in extending the period of time they spend in shared attention with staff. They improve their listening skills significantly, and learn to respond well to teachers' use of verbal and gestural cues. Many use symbols appropriately to communicate their basic needs, for example to indicate their choice of food at break-time. A few pupils learn to use applications on their personal tablets to communicate their personal care needs effectively.

Pupils who communicate using speech develop their understanding of social conventions around communication well. For example, they learn to take turns in their interactions with others and discuss their ideas patiently and in greater detail. This helps them to become more confident in how they engage with others. In lessons and around the school, many pupils follow staff instructions well. In structured learning situations, they demonstrate appropriate listening skills and respond accurately to questions.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their reading and writing skills at levels that are appropriate to their ability. Pupils who follow the sensory curriculum learn to make marks and form letter shapes using a variety of materials. A few more able pupils write brief responses to reading comprehension tasks independently or with the use of writing frames. Around half of these pupils read simple texts well. A few pupils read aloud with confidence and follow written information to complete a complex process such as following a recipe to bake a cake.

All pupils practise and develop numeracy skills at levels appropriate to their ability. For example, they count in order and add and subtract up to 1000. When they have the opportunity, they apply these skills well in practical contexts, such as when weighing ingredients in food technology sessions or when planting hanging baskets in horticulture sessions. Pupils with more complex needs consolidate successfully their early numeracy skills, such as digit recognition, counting and matching shapes.

Many pupils use tablets and desktop computers effectively to access applications to support their learning, for example to practise their numeracy skills. The majority of pupils use these programmes confidently to select information or choose songs and videos.

Most pupils develop their motor skills well during their time at the school. Pupils with physical and sensory needs improve their co-ordination and mobility through well-

planned therapeutic programmes and activities, and apply these skills suitably in gardening and cooking sessions. Most pupils develop their physical skills well through regular timetabled activities that reflect pupils' interests and abilities, such as community walks, canoeing, football, and climbing.

Most pupils develop valuable skills that help them to become more independent in areas such as food preparation, accessing the community and personal care. For example, they develop their understanding of personal safety through the safe use of kitchen appliances and garden tools. With prompting from staff, they learn to follow visual prompts and sequences that assist them in following activities through to completion more independently.

Over the last three years a very few pupils have gained units of accreditation in areas such as food technology, life skills and animal care.

The complexity of pupils' needs means that many pupils progress to supported living or residential provision when they leave the school. A few pupils move home to live with their parents. The skills pupils learn in school support them well to make a successful transition to this next stage of their lives.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Many pupils who attend Options Kinsale School have had periods of considerable disruption to their formal education and have experienced several school placements prior to starting at the school. As a result, pupils arrive at the school with significant variation in their starting points, little confidence as learners and heightened difficulties in managing their behaviour. Over time, they build secure relationships with staff and learn to feel safe in the school. This contributes effectively to the standards of pupils' wellbeing and the progress they make at the school.

As a result of the beneficial support they receive, nearly all pupils develop their resilience and engagement in learning during their time at the school. They respond positively to the wide variety of activities on offer and demonstrate an increasing willingness to participate and engage in new experiences as they move through the school. Pupils who follow the sensory curriculum develop the ability to maintain their attention over more sustained periods and to manage important transitions during their day more appropriately.

Most pupils attend school regularly and develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They enjoy their lessons and engage positively with teaching staff and learning activities. Pupils co-operate well with each other and where they have the opportunity, they work effectively in pairs, small groups or as a whole class.

With support, most pupils learn how to manage their behaviour more effectively over time. They behave appropriately in lessons and around the school, and respond courteously and positively to visitors to the school. Many pupils who communicate with speech share their experiences of the school confidently and enthusiastically.

Many pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet. For example, they participate in a wide range of activities during the school day to help them to keep healthy and fit. These include swimming, horse riding and walking.

Many pupils respond positively to staff prompting to make healthy choices at lunchtimes and throughout the school day.

A minority of pupils develop suitably their understanding of the importance of helping other people through their participation in a variety of fundraising activities. For example, they raise money by running charity cake sales, take part in Christmas jumper days and help to prepare for the Christmas Fair.

There are limited opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles or contribute fully to the work of the school. However, most pupils learn to make effective choices within school concerning the sequence of activities in lessons and their choice of rewards. A very few pupils are involved actively in decision-making about the curriculum. For example, they have influenced the topics they would like to learn about during a project on the Second World War.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school organises its curriculum well to address the wide range of needs and abilities of its pupils. For pupils who follow the sensory curriculum, there is a suitable emphasis on the development of communication, personal and social development. For more able pupils, there is an appropriate focus on applying independence skills in a wider variety of contexts in preparation for their post-school placements. This model allows a high degree of responsiveness to individual pupil needs and their readiness to engage with a wider range of activities as they progress through the school. This is a strong feature of the school's work.

Overall, the school provides an engaging variety of learning experiences that are well-matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. This includes suitable opportunities for classroom-based learning, as well as access to a beneficial range of activities in the local community, such as equine therapy, swimming, and shopping. These activities help to consolidate the development of pupils' social interaction and wellbeing.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. Teachers record and track pupils' small steps of progress in literacy and numeracy regularly. This helps to build pupils' confidence in these areas well. However, the school does not plan carefully enough to develop pupils' ability to apply these skills in practical contexts, for example when shopping or using money in the community. This means that teachers miss opportunities to strengthen and extend these skills in ways that are meaningful to the pupils.

Teachers and teaching assistants have a strong understanding of the complex needs of their pupils. Teachers, teaching assistants and support staff from the residential settings work well as a team to promote an inclusive and supportive learning environment in the school. They build caring working relationships with pupils and manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Over time, pupils learn to trust staff, grow in self-confidence and make good progress in their learning. However, in a few lessons, support staff do not have the expertise or receive sufficient guidance to promote the learning objectives successfully. As a result, the quality of learning support across the school is too variable.

Generally, teachers use their knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs to plan activities and tasks that engage pupils' interest successfully. In a minority of lessons, teachers include beneficial opportunities for pupils to work together and develop valuable social skills. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not set clear learning objectives that challenge pupils sufficiently and the pace of learning is too slow. Overall, there is limited evaluation of pupils' progress in the development of their skills over time and the quality of long-term planning to meet pupils' targets is underdeveloped.

In many lessons, teachers and teaching assistants provide clear instructions, and use a suitable variety of visual aids and interactions to reinforce pupils' understanding of what is expected of them. All staff provide pupils with consistent and encouraging verbal feedback that helps pupils to maintain their focus and achieve. However, the use of signing across the school to strengthen this positive practice is at an early stage of development.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a nurturing and supportive environment which helps pupils to feel safe and enables them to build trusting and productive relationships with staff. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well and take time to understand their needs thoroughly. This caring and sensitive approach has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and is an important strength of the school.

Pupils benefit significantly from the input of a range of beneficial specialist services including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, psychology and art therapy. The work of this team supports staff successfully to meet pupils' often complex needs. Representatives from the clinical, education and residential teams meet regularly to review the progress and wellbeing of each pupil, and to ensure strategies to support pupils are up-to-date and effective.

The school uses a suitable variety of assessments to establish a secure understanding of pupils' therapeutic and sensory needs when they join the school. These assessments enable staff to plan effectively to promote pupils' wellbeing in these important areas. However, systems to track and monitor pupils' progress in learning are underdeveloped and do not capture the progress pupils make at the school well enough. They focus mostly on very small steps of progress in literacy and numeracy and do not capture pupils' progress across wider skills or in areas that are important to pupils' future lives well enough.

The clinical team supports education staff to set targets in individual education plans on issues that relate well to pupils' personal wellbeing, for example to do with their diet or aspects of their personal care. This approach helps pupils to develop an appropriate understanding of issues that relate to their personal safety in the school and in the community. However, the school does not plan strategically enough for pupils' personal and social education as a whole. As a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to play a full role in the life of their community and develop an appropriate understanding of their place in the world.

Arrangements to promote positive behaviour are clear and well understood. Staff implement the school's behaviour policy effectively and the school tracks and

evaluates incidents relating to challenging behaviour robustly. This allows staff to identify patterns and plan strategies to help pupils learn to manage their behaviours more successfully. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their social skills. For example, a few older pupils attend courses at local colleges of further education. This helps build their self-esteem and prepares them well for transition to their next stage in learning.

The school has suitable arrangements to promote pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and where relevant, they have personal targets to extend their understanding of this. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in physical exercise, through activities such as canoeing, gorge walking and cycling. The school's curriculum includes regular timetabled opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills through horticulture lessons and adventure walks.

The school provides parents and carers with valuable information about their child's progress through end of year reports, a social media application, telephone calls and the home-school liaison books. This communication helps the school, parents and carers to develop consistent approaches to pupils' wellbeing and learning.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

After a period of successive changes in the leadership of the school over recent years, the school has a settled leadership team. The appointment of a permanent headteacher, who was previously the school's deputy headteacher, and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher in September 2017, is helping to consolidate recent beneficial changes to practice and procedures at the school.

Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide committed and reflective leadership. They communicate a clear vision for the school which is shared and understood by all members of the education team and which has the wellbeing and progress of pupils at the heart of the school's work. Regular meetings ensure there are suitable opportunities to share important information about pupil wellbeing and review progress. Teachers and teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work together efficiently to support the ethos of the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. They have implemented a number of beneficial measures to strengthen provision over the past year. This includes changes to the curriculum model to provide greater continuity of learning and to support pupils' transitions more effectively during the school day. They have strengthened quality assurance processes through the establishment of the quality assurance group, learning walks and work scrutiny to inform their evaluation of the school's work and identify priorities for improvement. However, leaders do not consider carefully enough the resources and timescales required to ensure these changes are implemented thoroughly. As a result, many of the school's recent actions remain at an early stage of development.

The headteacher is beginning to develop valuable strategic partnerships with other schools in the independent and maintained special sectors in the North Wales region. This is helping the school to share ideas and explore aspects of effective practice identified in other similar schools, and to extend the range of learning experiences available to pupils. For example, a few pupils attend placements and courses at local post-16 colleges in construction or farming skills.

The school provides a suitable learning environment that generally meets the needs of its pupils well. Facilities such as the sports hall, gym, play area and the kitchen garden are well-maintained and provide effective opportunities for learning and recreation.

The school does not have a delegated budget. This means that leaders are not able to plan independently of the service as a whole to address identified areas for improvement or plan sufficiently for long-term improvement. In certain areas, such as professional learning for staff, this hinders the school from implementing identified training required to address pupils' communication needs or to provide training for residential staff who support pupils in education during the day. This was an issue identified in the most recent Estyn monitoring visit in November 2017. As a result, the school has made only slow progress against this recommendation.

There is a well-defined structure for the governance of the school. The board of governors includes members with relevant experience of special education and brings additional expertise to the new leadership team. This is helping to strengthen the school's emerging quality assurance procedures, for example through the involvement of governors in learning walks and lesson observations. However, overall, the impact of governors' work in this area remains at an early stage of development.

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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This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).

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Publication date: 26/11/2018