



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

A report on
Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of pilot inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth

Name of provider	Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth
Proprietor	Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth is administered by the Phoenix Learning and Care group, part of the portfolio of Ashridge capital, a private equity investment company.
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent Special School
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	20
Pupils of statutory school age	20
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	22/01/2024
<p>Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth is an independent day school, which is located in a suburban area of Newport.</p> <p>The school is registered to educate a maximum of 23 pupils aged between 7 and 16 years of age. Currently there are 20 pupils on the school roll aged between 10 to 14 years of age. The school provides a tailored curriculum for pupils who have specific needs relating to autistic spectrum condition (ASC). The pupils are placed by local authorities in Wales and England. All pupils have an IDP (individual development plan) or equivalent.</p> <p>The headteacher has been in post since the school was established in February 2022. The school also has a deputy headteacher, an additional learning needs co ordinator (ALNCo), six teachers, twelve teaching assistants and three therapists.</p>	

Summary

Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth is a school where staff develop particularly effective working relationships with pupils based on a secure understanding of their emotional and additional learning needs. Through valuable professional learning, staff develop valuable skills, which help support pupils to self-regulate, develop their social skills and manage their behaviour. Pupils respond positively to this, and over time settle well into the school and feel safe and secure.

The structure of classes across the school into stages rather than year groups helps to ensure personal and developmental compatibility between pupils. Class sizes are small, with a maximum of four pupils supported by a minimum of one teacher and one teaching assistant. These small class sizes mean that teachers and teaching assistants are able to provide a high degree of beneficial support for individual pupils. However, the level of challenge provided by staff to support pupils' progress is not consistent across the school.

The school has strong leadership that oversees the implementation of an appropriate curriculum and sound teaching. Leaders are in the early stages of further developing the curriculum to meet the needs of older pupils as they prepare for their next stages in work or education. As a result of the quality of teaching and learning experiences at the school, nearly all pupils make sound progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. A notable feature is the strong progress most pupils make in their social skills and in improving their attendance and engagement in learning. However, there is a limited focus on teaching and learning within quality assurance processes and professional learning for staff.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2003 to maintain its registration.

Main findings

Pupil well-being and relationships

Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth is a nurturing community where pupils feel safe and valued. Over time, staff develop strong working relationships with pupils based on a secure understanding of their interests and social and emotional needs.

The school has a comprehensive and beneficial transition programme for new pupils to the school which supports them well in adapting to their new environment. This ensures that most pupils settle well and attend regularly. For most pupils, this represents strong progress from their previous school.

A notable strength of the school is the positive relationships most pupils build with their peers during their time at school. Over time, most pupils learn important skills such as tolerance, respect and how to listen to one another.

Pupil voice is a strong feature of the school. Pupils have direct impact on what they learn, by setting personal weekly targets and reviewing these with their teachers. A minority of pupils have been elected to act as school ambassadors by their peers. With support, they help to oversee elements of school life such as planning events and choosing and leading break time sports activities. As a result, nearly all pupils feel involved in school life and listened to by staff and leaders.

Provision for additional learning needs (ALN)

Across the school, nearly all staff have a comprehensive understanding and awareness of pupils' needs and the provision for pupils' additional learning needs (ALN) is highly effective. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are appropriately linked to their IDPs or equivalent and include pupils' aspirations for their future. However, at the time of the inspection around half of the pupils have a primary need that is outside the registration category of the school.

The school benefits from the support of a school based therapeutic team comprising a speech and language therapist, an art psychotherapist and a music psychotherapist. This support provides the school with highly effective opportunities to share information from a range of helpful assessments of pupils' wider needs. As a result of the close work between the therapeutic team and other staff, pupils receive consistent, sensitive support that meets their emotional, physical, and learning needs well.

Cameo – 'Big Feelings'

The therapies team at Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth became aware that pupils were anxious when they were unsure how staff would respond to them if they were experiencing a 'big' or unwanted feeling. In addition, some of the teaching team requested support in knowing how to respond effectively to signs of emotional dysregulation in new pupils. The team felt that the most effective way to address this issue was to allow the pupils to have a say in how they would like staff to behave in response to any 'big feelings'. Staff supported pupils to contribute to their behaviour support plans, for example by

providing them with a wide range of symbolised behaviour strategies for them to identify what worked for them.

Many of the pupils lack the vocabulary to clearly express their feelings to adults, However, across the school, the use of the term 'big feeling' is well understood by the pupils. This is beginning to lead to improved social skills, stronger relationships between peers and a recognition that other people have 'big feelings' too. Talking about 'big feelings' is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' mental health, tolerance of others and overall well-being.

Learning experiences and pupil progress

Ysgol Tŷ Monmouth provides a broad range of learning experiences for pupils, which are well matched to the school's vision and values. The curriculum is driven appropriately by the individual learning needs of the pupils, their therapeutic needs and their interests and aspirations. The organisation of the curriculum into three stages, 'nurture', 'flourish' and 'grow', effectively reflects the wide range of pupils' ages, needs and abilities who attend the school.

Across the school there is a wide range of well-planned opportunities for pupils to access learning both inside and outside the classroom. For example, pupils develop and explore numeracy skills when spending money at the tuck shop and enjoy visits to St Fagan's, a trampoline park and a farm. Overall planning is appropriate and meets the individual needs and interests of pupils well. However, the provision for more regular vocational opportunities within the curriculum is in the early stages of development.

The school provides a robust, supportive social curriculum that allows pupils to explore and develop tolerance, understanding and empathy. Pupils have opportunities to work in larger groups outside their classroom and take part in listening and sharing activities, such as debates and sensory play.

Teaching staff monitor pupils' well-being carefully. Where relevant, a well-considered graduated response ensures that pupils engage with learning. For example, appropriate curriculum adjustments are made to meet pupils' needs such as identifying topics of interest based on pupil voice activities. This effectively supports the pupils' continued engagement in worthwhile educational experiences within the school. However, overall the level of challenge in lessons to support pupil progress is too variable .

Staff at the school provide sensitive praise and verbal feedback, which supports pupils well to engage and progress in their learning. However, feedback does not always provide pupils with their next steps in learning. Further, written feedback is not always accessible or meaningful for the pupil.

Over their time at the school, nearly all pupils develop appropriate literacy, numeracy and digital skills progressively in line with their additional learning needs. For example, they develop from recognising types of angles, to calculating the missing angle on a straight line to then identifying angles within 2D shapes.

Nearly all pupils develop their independence skills well over their time at the school. For example, they use the self-scanner in shops with confidence to buy ingredients, cook homemade gluten-free pizzas and clean the kitchen afterwards.

Safeguarding

The school has well-defined processes for supporting the well-being needs of pupils and encouraging good attendance and behaviour. Leaders use information effectively to take a holistic view of each pupil's attendance and behaviour, in line with pupils' ALN, to identify relevant actions and support.

The school has an effective personal and social education (PSE) programme, supported by resources that have been appropriately adapted for the needs and developmental stages of pupils. As a result, many pupils develop a beneficial understanding of important areas such as positive relationships, internet safety and making healthy choices. The curriculum is suitably enhanced by external visitors. For example, the local police liaison officer delivers sessions on important topics such as anti-bullying and sexting and the 'railway police' allow pupils to explore staying safe on the railways.

The school keeps detailed and accurate records of all behavioural incidents. It uses the staff team, including the therapy team, to support pupils well and pay appropriate attention to recognising triggers and reflecting on practice across the school. As a result, most pupils feel safe at school.

Overall, staff have a strong understanding of their role in safeguarding pupils. There are robust safer recruitment processes in place. In addition, safeguarding leads record and report concerns appropriately. However, organisational procedures lead to a repetition of reporting, which does not represent a good use of leaders' time.

Leading and improving

Leaders have a clear vision to develop a nurturing school with pupils at the heart of everything they do. Staff collaborate very effectively to achieve this aim, ensuring that pupils settle well when they join the school and build positive working relationships with staff and peers based on trust and mutual respect.

Since the school opened in 2022, leaders have developed an engaged and motivated team in a bright, welcoming and well-maintained learning environment. They strive for positive outcomes for their pupils. Parents value the regular and clear communication about their child's progress and well-being in school.

Leaders collate a range of beneficial first-hand information through quality assurance activities such as learning walks and analysis of data. They use this information to plan school improvement priorities suitably. Leaders have a track record of implementing positive changes at the school, for example when responding to recommendations from previous inspection visits. However, this work has a limited focus on improving teaching and learning.

Staff benefit from a range of professional learning opportunities including through peer observations across the school or recent staff training on deaf awareness. However, there are limited opportunities for professional learning that focuses on

teaching and learning or to improve teachers' depth of knowledge in different areas of the curriculum.

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.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Refine processes for quality assurance and improvement planning to focus more on teaching and pupil progress
- R2 Continue to develop the curriculum and vocational learning opportunities to support pupils to follow their desired learning pathways
- R3 Ensure that learning activities consistently challenge all pupils to make good progress

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. The school must also provide a copy of this report or a summary of it to all parents/carers at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analysed the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and considered the views of teachers, staff and the governing body / management committee members through their questionnaire responses

During the inspection, inspectors:

- held a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school/PRU and its effectiveness
- met the headteacher, governors/management committee, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's/PRU's work
- met pupils to discuss their work, listen to them reading and gain their views about various aspects of their school
- met groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives of the school council and eco-committee
- visited a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertook a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a variety of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visited the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observed and spoke to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after school/PRU clubs, where appropriate
- attended assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- looked closely at the school's/PRU's self-evaluation processes
- considered the school's/PRU's improvement plan and looked at evidence to show how well the school/PRU had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinised a range of school/PRU documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, minutes of staff and governing body/management committee meetings, 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:

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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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