



Annual monitoring inspection report on:

Woodlands Children's Development Centre

Date of inspection: March 2014

by

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

Estyn's annual monitoring visits to independent and independent special schools in Wales are required to report on whether the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) registration standards regulations for independent schools are met and, where they are not met, what they need to do in order to comply.

Further information regarding the regulations governing this monitoring visit can be found in the following documentation:

- Welsh Assembly Government: *Independent Schools Information and Registration Handbook*, April 2004; and
- Welsh Office Circular 37/94: *Independent schools which admit pupils with special educational needs*:
 - paragraphs 1-8: granting/removing approval;
 - paragraph 42: changes in character, management or control of the school; and
 - 37/94 paragraph 43: significant differences from approved number.

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Woodlands Children's Development Centre provides highly specialised residential care, education and therapy for boys aged between 11 and 18 who have significant and complex social, emotional and behavioural needs. The school currently has nine pupils on roll, all of whom live in children's homes that are operated by the Woodlands organisation. Six of the pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN).

This monitoring inspection reports on the school's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the S163 inspection report of July 2013. Following that inspection, the proprietors strengthened the leadership of the school. They appointed a new headteacher and put in place a governing body to provide the school with support and challenge. The headteacher took up her post in January 2014.

Main findings

Strengths

The school's strengths are that:

- the headteacher provides strong leadership for the school. Leaders have a commitment to continuous school improvement and have made good progress in addressing most of the recommendations of the S163 report of July 2013. They have put in place a comprehensive school improvement plan (SIP);
- pupils have regular opportunities to express their views. They contribute effectively to monthly meetings about their progress;
- pupils engage well in lessons. They interact well with staff and acquire new knowledge and skills;
- pupils have appropriate access to qualifications including AQA units, Entry Level and GCSE courses. They benefit from a wide range of additional learning opportunities, including outdoor education and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme;
- teachers ensure that lessons are well planned, have clear learning objectives and address targets from individual education plans (IEPs). They manage pupils' behaviour well;
- staff enjoy good working relationships with pupils and motivate them well with praise and encouragement;
- there are good links between care, therapy and education staff that benefit pupils; and
- specialist therapeutic support services are co-ordinated well and make an important contribution to the wellbeing and personal development of all pupils.

Areas for development

The school's areas for development are that:

- the school has put in place a curriculum policy that sets out the aims and objectives of the curriculum and provides teachers with appropriate guidance. Although the school has started to review what is taught in each subject at each key stage, comprehensive schemes of work are not in place for all subject areas;
- all pupils have IEPs that are based on a useful initial assessment. However, although IEPs include targets for behaviour and academic work, many of these do not relate closely enough to objectives set in the pupil's statement of SEN;
- the school has made progress in implementing strategies to improve pupils' reading and writing skills and give them more confidence in their abilities. Although these strategies have had an impact, pupils' handwriting is immature and the school's emphasis on developing pupils' phonic skills is not tailored well enough to meet their individual learning needs; and
- although the school complies with most of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, a very few matters need further attention. These include:
 - providing more detail in the anti-bullying policy;
 - ensuring that there is a clear link between the record of serious incidents and the record of sanctions used;
 - recording pupils' attendance more carefully and in line with the recognised codes;
 - ensuring that the school maintains an admissions register that includes all the statutory information; and
 - ensuring that parents and carers know that they may request the information listed in Standard 6.

Recommendations

- R1** Ensure compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2** Develop detailed schemes of work for each curriculum area
- R3** Make sure that the provision set out in pupils' statements of special educational needs is included in the planning for each pupil
- R4** Continue to develop pupils' literacy skills by focusing on improving their handwriting and ensuring that teaching strategies to improve pupils' reading and spelling skills are appropriate to meet their varying individual needs

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous note of visit or inspection report

Recommendation 1: Comply fully with the regulations for registration

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations set out in the S163 inspection report of July 2013. Leaders have prioritised the standards and regulations requiring an immediate response and have established a suitable timeframe to address those that remain outstanding.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that the school's policies and procedures for staff recruitment and safeguarding pupils are robust and comply fully with Welsh Government and Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidance

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has made good progress in improving its arrangements to ensure the effective safeguarding of pupils. The revised child protection policy meets requirements and has been approved formally by the school governors. The school has designated a link governor for safeguarding. A new designated teacher with responsibility for child protection was appointed in September 2013. He received appropriate level 3 training in December 2013.

All staff received basic child protection training at the start of the school year and refresher training is planned. Staff must sign to confirm that they have read the school's policy. In September 2013, the school wrote to advise parents of the new policy and inform them that they may request copies.

The school has improved its administrative systems to ensure safe staff recruitment.

Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers. The school is establishing a single central record of these checks.

However, the school's anti-bullying policy lacks detail concerning the school's procedures in dealing with bullying, how issues are recorded and the training given to staff.

The school's policy regarding sanctions given for poor behaviour and how these are recorded is unclear.

Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of the curriculum by developing suitable schemes of work and consistency in planning at every stage

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has reviewed the curriculum policy and has put in place robust systems to monitor its implementation. Teachers plan lessons well, and set clear learning

objectives and tasks that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers have started to evaluate what is taught in each subject area. However, schemes of work are only available in a minority of subjects and do not have a consistent format. The SIP sets appropriate timescales for the completion of this work.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that leaders take a more rigorous approach to strategic planning and monitor the school's work more effectively

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Following the S163 inspection in July 2013, the proprietor employed an educational consultant to advise the school on developing an appropriate action plan to move the school forward.

The action plan is a detailed document that:

- defines clearly the action planned;
- identifies the person(s) responsible for taking action;
- establishes specific timescales for the completion of each action and suitable milestones that will enable staff to judge progress towards completing each action;
- defines the criteria for judging the success or otherwise of the action in meeting its objectives; and
- specifies the financial and time resources that will be allocated to each action.

The school acted promptly to address the safeguarding issues the inspection had identified.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that self-evaluation processes are comprehensive, systematic and consistent across the school and that they identify appropriate improvement priorities

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Leaders have put in place a self-evaluation process with an appropriate focus on improving teaching. The newly appointed headteacher undertakes monthly lesson observations, scrutinises teachers planning documents and completes a half-termly scrutiny of pupils' work. Areas for improvement are recorded and shared with teachers.

To involve teachers more effectively in the quality assurance process, a system of peer observation has been introduced. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these processes on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders encourage pupils to share their views and to raise issues through the completion of questionnaires and meetings of the newly formed school council. Staff also contribute to the self-evaluation process through regular attendance at meetings that have a clear focus on aspects of school improvement and through the completion of questionnaires.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

- ensure that the education provided fulfils the requirements of pupils' statements [1(2e)];and
- provide education that enables all pupils within a class to make progress including pupils with statements [1(5)].

Standard 2: The spiritual, moral, social 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

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to National Assembly circular 23/03 "Respecting Others: Anti-bullying Guidance" [(3(2a))];
- keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences [3(8)]; and
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 [3(9)].

Standard 4: The suitability of proprietors and staff

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 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 5

Standard 6: The provision of information

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should make the following information available, and make it clear that parents/carers may request it:

- particulars of the curriculum offered by the school [6(2g)];
- particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, the promotion of good behaviour and sanctions in the event of pupils misbehaving [6(2h)]; and

- particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations [6(2i)].

Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendation regarding registration

When considering this school's registration the National Assembly for Wales may wish to have regard to the following recommendation:

- the school does not currently meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school should address the issues identified above for each standard.

Inspectors' judgements on this annual monitoring inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

School information

School	Woodlands Children's Development Centre
School number	665/6042
Purpose of visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post S163 monitoring inspection.
Date of visit	3 March 2014
Proprietor	Woodlands Ltd
Staff	4 full-time teachers including the headteacher and 4 part-time teachers 2 full-time tutors. 1 part-time teaching assistant / cover supervisor
Number of pupils	9
Provision	43 week term time education and therapy for boys aged 11 – 18 with significant and complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.
Type of special educational need (SEN) catered for by the school	Social emotional and behavioural difficulties
Last Section 163 inspection	1 to 4 July 2013
Last annual monitoring inspection	June 2011
Last CSSIW inspection	Station Cottage 14 January 2013 Old School House 16 January 2013 Ty Coed 4 November 2013

Team information

Reporting Inspector	Anthony Mulcahy
Team Inspector	Rosemary Lait