



Annual monitoring inspection report on:

Aran Hall School

Date of inspection: May 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

Aran Hall is an independent residential special school for learners with autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour close to the town of Dolgellau in North Wales.

The school aims to provide a nurturing and caring environment with a broad and balanced curriculum that;

- reduces challenging behaviour;
- increases functional communication;
- develops self care and independent living skills; and
- increases community participation and social integration.

The school has established strong links with Nova Southeastern University in the USA and Bangor in Wales to develop the skills and the expertise of its staff in using applied behavioural analysis to plan, monitor and evaluate learners' behaviour and inform teaching approaches.

Main findings

Strengths

The school's strengths are that:

- pupils engage well with a structured programme of personal, social, sex and relationships education that is tailored to their individual needs. This enables pupils to grow in confidence and develop strategies to keep themselves safe;
- pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to research and present their work in a wide range of learning activities;
- nearly all pupils make good progress with the development of social and communication skills. They are welcoming to visitors and are confident in talking about their achievements;
- the school is actively involved in academic research and has developed innovative approaches for tracking and analysing pupils' behaviour;
- staff manage pupils' behaviour well;
- leaders and managers identify and meet the development needs of teachers well. As a result, teachers gain new knowledge and skills;
- the school engages successfully with a range of partners who provide valuable work experience and social learning experiences for pupils. These partnerships prepare pupils well for life and work outside of school; and
- the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Areas for development

The school's areas for development are that:

- although staff provide detailed feedback to pupils regarding task completion and behaviour, the feedback does not specifically relate to skills development and does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work;
- best practice in planning schemes of work is not shared widely across the school and the quality of planning is too varied; and
- leaders and managers complete regular lesson observations and monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching well. However, observations do not focus well enough on the standards pupils achieve in lessons.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve assessment to ensure that teachers provide pupils with detailed feedback so that they know how to improve their work
- R2 Ensure that best practice for planning and developing schemes of work is in place across the school
- R3 Further develop the lesson observation process to include an evaluation of the standards pupils achieve in lessons

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

Recommendation 1: Widen opportunities for students to gain accreditation in an appropriate range of subjects

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Pupils access an appropriate range of courses linked to their ability and interests. Pupils follow courses leading to recognised qualifications including GCSE and ASDAN courses where appropriate. The school liaises well with local colleges to extend the range of opportunities available to pupils.

Recommendation 2: Increase the pupils' use of ICT to access the curriculum and record their work

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The school has invested in the provision of ICT hardware and all pupils now have individual electronic tablets as well as access to desk top computers in their classrooms. Pupils use these effectively to access the curriculum and record their work in lessons and in other community based learning activities. Pupil use of the internet is closely monitored and appropriate controls are in place for safeguarding pupils.

Recommendation 3: Effectively track pupil progress, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy skills

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Teachers monitor the progress of pupils in the core subjects well and there is an appropriate focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed on entry to the school and teachers are supported by further assessments and advice from an educational psychologist. Teachers identify opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in most session plans and monitor pupils' progress regularly.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that learning targets are appropriate and are in line with pupils' ability

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has recently revised its procedures for writing IEPs. The IEPs now include specific and measurable targets with appropriate achievement criteria, strategies and resources. However, it is too early to identify the impact of these changes on pupil outcomes.

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, 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

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 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

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 National Assembly for Wales 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 annual monitoring inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

School information

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| School | Aran Hall |
| School number | 661/6022 |
| Purpose of visit | Annual monitoring inspection |
| Date of visit | 6 – 7 May 2014 |
| Proprietor | SENAD |
| Staff | 1 x Principal 4 x Teachers 5 x Classroom assistants 54 x care support workers 7 x Admin / ancillary staff |
| Number of pupils | 10 on roll |
| Provision | Residential provision for boys and girls 11 to 19 years old who have severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. The children's home offers 52 week, 44 week and 38 week residential placements. |
| Type of special educational need (SEN) catered for by the school | Pupils have learning disabilities and challenging behaviour. |
| Last Section 163 inspection | March 2010 |
| Last annual monitoring inspection | November 2013 |
| Last CSSIW inspection | February 2014 |

Team information

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| Reporting Inspector | Anthony Mulcahy |
| Team Inspector | Ann Dackevych |