



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

A report on

**Nant Y Cwm Steiner School
Llanycefn
Nr Clynderwen
Pembrokeshire
SA66 7QJ**

Date of inspection: June 2019

by

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

About Nant Y Cwm Steiner School

Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School is in the village of Llanycefn in Pembrokeshire. It is a co-educational independent day school for boys and girls from 3 to 14 years of age. It was founded in 1979 and is a charitable trust, managed by a board of trustees. The school is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and provides a Steiner Waldorf education, taking an holistic view of the development of the child.

The school is organised into two sections. The kindergarten caters for pupils aged 3 to 6 years and the main school for pupils aged 6 to 14 years. There are currently 63 pupils on roll. These include 17 pupils in the kindergarten and 46 pupils in the main school.

Most pupils travel from a wide area that includes Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. A few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language or speak Welsh as a first language at home. The school identifies around 8% of pupils as having special educational needs. However, no child has a statement of special educational needs.

The school admits pupils with a wide range of abilities. Prior to entry, prospective pupils join the school for a trial period and they attend an interview with their parents to ensure that they are familiar with the school's aim and ethos. The school offers admissions on the basis of its ability to meet the child's needs. The school describes its ethos and purpose as 'to educate the whole child: head, heart and hand, through a stimulating and inspiring Steiner curriculum that meets the needs of each child as a unique individual.'

The last inspection of the school was in May 2013. The school has a collegiate approach to leadership and therefore does not have a headteacher.

Summary

Nant y Cwm Steiner School provide pupils with a safe, caring family environment. Most pupils have high levels of wellbeing and enjoy coming to school. Many pupils behave well, listen carefully and concentrate successfully for sustained periods of time. As they move through the school, many pupils make suitable progress in their learning, particularly in improving their physical and creative skills. However, their progress in developing their literacy and the full range of mathematical skills is less consistent.

Most teachers and pupils have strong, supportive working relationships. Teachers plan generally worthwhile and engaging learning experiences for pupils. However, they do not provide enough suitable opportunities for pupils to think carefully to solve problems or to work independently. Too often, teachers' tasks do not challenge pupils of differing abilities appropriately.

The school's self-governing learning community and collegiate leadership arrangements lack rigour. The shared leadership approach has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and on raising standards. Quality assurance arrangements lack rigour and, as a result, there is no clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent 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 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.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership
- R2 Improve the quality and accuracy of quality assurance activities and strengthen improvement planning processes
- R3 Improve teaching so that teachers challenge all groups of pupils to achieve as well as they can and so that feedback to pupils helps them to improve their work
- R4 Improve standards of literacy and the full range of mathematical skills
- R5 Improve how the school tracks pupils' skills development
- R6 Increase opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners

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. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

As they move through the school, many pupils make suitable progress in their learning, particularly in improving their physical and creative skills. However, their progress in developing their literacy and the full range of mathematical skills is less consistent. Overall, many pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not improve their literacy and mathematical skills well enough. This is because activities do not always challenge them effectively and often the pace of learning is too slow. Many pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in relation to their starting points.

Most pupils have strong oracy skills. Many pupils listen well when others are speaking and respond appropriately to instructions, for example in movement lessons. Pupils in the kindergarten are keen to talk about their activities with many using a wide range of mature vocabulary. Many older pupils in the main school have well developed speaking skills, for example they recite lengthy birthday verses projecting their voice effectively, using clear diction. Most of these pupils explain their work with confidence and clarity.

When pupils start in the main school they develop their early reading skills slowly. The majority of pupils struggle to read simple words and have insecure knowledge of phonics. However, most older pupils improve their reading skills suitably. The majority of these pupils read with fluency and expression but a minority have limited understanding of what they have read. Older pupils do not have well developed higher order skills such as the use of inference or an appreciation of how authors use language to create effect.

In the main school, most writing completed by younger pupils is copied from texts or dictated by teachers. As a result, many pupils do not develop the ability to write well independently, learn how to use punctuation correctly or improve their spelling skills. Older pupils begin to produce more independent pieces of work. For example, pupils in Class 5 and 6 write accurate accounts of a physics experiment on the properties of materials. In Class 8 pupils write interesting poems about the seaside and detailed biographies. These pupils use an appropriate range of punctuation and spell accurately. Many pupils write using a neat cursive script and the majority of older pupils present their work with care. However, older pupils do not write often enough creatively or at length and apart from a few more able pupils, do not use a rich variety of vocabulary to engage the reader.

In the kindergarten, pupils begin to learn and use mathematical language appropriately. For example, they use words such as 'less' and 'more' when filling a jug with water and the term 'half' correctly when cutting up fruit. Younger pupils in the main school learn how to use the four rules of number appropriately. The majority of older pupils carry out basic mathematical operations accurately. For example, they convert percentages into decimals correctly. Many pupils use their mathematical skills well in real life situations, such as to determine profit and loss when purchasing and selling a number of shares in different companies. However, across the main school more able pupils in particular do not improve these skills

quickly enough as work does not always challenge them effectively. In addition, they do not develop the full range of mathematical skills as most work has a number focus. Throughout the main school, pupils do not use their numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum well enough.

Through the regular opportunities provided by the school, most pupils refine their physical skills well. Younger pupils throw and catch bean bags accurately whilst many older pupils manipulate a hockey stick well. As they move through the school most pupils improve their creative skills successfully. In the kindergarten they use simple sewing skills to decorate soft toys, whilst younger pupils in the main school use water colours to create imaginative flower pictures. Older pupils in the main school use their knowledge of light and dark to create mature charcoal pictures to demonstrate perspective.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Throughout the school, most pupils have high levels of wellbeing and enjoy coming to school. They have a sound awareness of how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Nearly all pupils know who to talk to if they are upset or have a problem. They are confident that staff will deal with any issues that they might have. In the main school, pupils have regular meetings with their class teacher to discuss their work and for pastoral support.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate mature levels of confidence when engaging with adults and their peers. Many are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Many pupils treat their teachers and peers with respect. They interact well with pupils of different ages and this fosters their strong sense of belonging to one family.

During lessons, many pupils behave well. They listen carefully to teachers' explanations and concentrate successfully for sustained periods of time. Nearly all pupils move between lessons calmly and are aware of the school rules. However, a minority of younger pupils in the main school are occasionally slow to engage with their learning and require frequent reminders to remain on task.

Many pupils show considerable pride in their work. For example, they are keen to share their topic books, which they have presented artistically. Most pupils work cooperatively in pairs and groups. However, many pupils in the main school do not develop the skills to enable them to work independently well enough. They rely heavily on teacher led activities and seek support too readily when they find activities challenging.

Nearly all pupils show a very good understanding of how to keep healthy and the need to exercise regularly. For example, in the main school, pupils have only healthy snacks and lunchboxes and pupils in the kindergarten help prepare food for their healthy morning snack. Most pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities. For example, older pupils take part in the annual 'Steiner Olympics' where they engage in physical activities with pupils from other Steiner schools from across the world. Nearly all kindergarten pupils participate enthusiastically in outdoor active learning.

Across the school, all pupils have class responsibilities, which they carry out with enthusiasm and diligence. Members of the school's pupil support team take their roles very seriously. They are beginning to make valuable contributions to improving the day-to-day life of the school. For example, they have introduced book swaps and a shop for pupils to purchase stationery. Older pupils show a responsible attitude towards their role of 'buddies' for younger pupils in the main school.

Many pupils are aware of how to be a responsible citizen and contribute enthusiastically to charitable events both nationally and internationally. For example, they undertake litter picks to help improve the local environment and take part in World Book Day. In the kindergarten, pupils regularly help staff to mend toys. These activities help pupils understand the importance of sustainability and to value resources.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The school's curriculum is based on the Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy that is designed to meet the needs of pupils at their various stages of emotional, intellectual and physical development. In the kindergarten, the emphasis is on creative and outdoor play, songs and counting games, as well as activities such as food preparation, painting and modelling.

In the main school, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of number and providing suitable linguistic experiences. Pupils also have worthwhile opportunities to study science, humanities, French, music and the arts, as well as taking part in activities such as handwork, crafts, gardening and games. The school organises a range of beneficial trips and visits to support the curriculum. For example, older pupils visit Iceland to study geology, whilst younger pupils visit the Roman exhibits in Bath and the Egypt centre as part of their history topics. These opportunities help broaden pupils' educational experiences and support their personal and social development well. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture. For example, kindergarten pupils hold an annual Eisteddfod and pupils in the main school make visits to local places of interest such as the National Botanical Gardens of Wales.

Teachers plan generally worthwhile and engaging learning experiences for pupils. However, the school's long term planning does not identify how teachers will adapt activities to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities well enough. In addition, in this planning, there is insufficient focus on how tasks will develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, thinking and problem-solving skills. There are limited opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of extra-curricular clubs.

Across the school most teachers have strong, supportive working relationships with pupils. Many staff have secure subject knowledge. In many cases, teachers present a range of interesting topics that engage pupils successfully. They provide clear explanations to help pupils gain a sound understanding of new concepts and themes. In a minority of instances, teachers use questioning well to reinforce earlier learning and encourage pupils to think carefully. In a few classes, there are valuable

opportunities for pupils to work independently or in small groups, for example to create a board game based on number operations. In a very few cases, teachers devise challenging projects such as when pupils have the opportunity to balance a family budget taking note of monthly income and expenditure.

Teachers do not provide enough suitable opportunities for pupils to think carefully to solve problems or to work independently. In many classes, pupils spend too much time listening to teachers' accounts and simply recording and organising this information. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their higher-order reading skills and to produce extended creative writing for a range of purposes. Too often, tasks do not challenge pupils of differing abilities appropriately. In a very few cases, the school does not deploy support staff effectively to support pupils' learning.

The majority of teachers give frequent, helpful verbal feedback that assists pupils to understand new concepts more clearly and to improve aspects of their work. However, the quality of written feedback varies too much. In too many instances, teachers do not mark pupils' work or identify errors often enough. There is not a consistent approach across the school to ensure that written feedback provides clear advice to support improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides pupils with a safe, caring family environment where pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of all of its work. Staff know pupils and their families well and have a close supporting bond with parents and their children alike.

In the kindergarten, staff track pupils' skill development regularly. Teachers use this information usefully to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. However, in the main school, although individual teachers provide pupils with useful tests and make judgements on their progress, they do not track pupils' skills development well enough. As a result, teachers do not have a secure understanding of pupils' progress and achievement in key areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs through individual assessments. Targeted pupils have individual support plans that include suitable targets for improvement. The school shares these plans with parents and pupils effectively. The school's additional needs coordinator works closely with class teachers to monitor the progress that pupils make towards meeting their targets. In addition, he liaises appropriately with outside agencies to provide support and advice for pupils, when required. As a result, many pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in their learning.

Staff ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They issue parents with useful guidance to encourage pupils to eat healthy food at lunchtime and promote active lifestyles during movement and games lesson and at break times. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about how to stay safe, including when using the internet

Parents receive beneficial information on how they can support their child's learning at home. This includes regular educational afternoons for parents and termly class

meetings where teachers report on the progress of their class. Staff write detailed annual pupil reports which give parents valuable information on their child's achievements. However reports do not always include suitable targets for improvement.

Staff give older pupils the chance to develop leadership skills through, for example their pupil support group. These pupils have the opportunity to help organise school events and help supervise the school shop. Through regular class shows, pupils in the main school have opportunities to perform to different audiences.

Staff ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to raise money for charity. For example, they encourage pupils and their families to donate items for a local food bank and raise money for a school in Rwanda. These activities give pupils a sound understanding that there are people less fortunate than themselves. The Steiner curriculum includes worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and religions. The school also encourages pupils to act in a sustainable way, for example by making use of reusable packaging and helping to mend school resources. This work helps pupils to develop as responsible global citizens.

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

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The school's self-governing learning community and collegiate leadership arrangements lack rigour. This shared leadership approach has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and on raising standards.

Nant y Cwm Steiner school is successful in promoting the Steiner vision, values and ethos. This contributes well to the strong relationship with parents, close nurturing family environment and pupils' high levels of wellbeing. The nature of the school's organisational structure and collegiate approach to leadership through the work of specific support teams allows all staff and parents to contribute to, and have ownership of, the school's strategic development priorities.

There are a broad range of suitable policies and procedures that guide many areas of the school's work. The administration officer ensures the school operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis. However, due to the collegiate structure and consensus decision making, it is often difficult for the school to make prompt decisions on particular issues or aspects of the school's work.

The school does not have effective mechanisms to hold staff to account robustly for the quality of their work. Staff do not have personalised job descriptions that set out their precise roles and responsibilities clearly. There is no clear line management structure. As a result, staff do not receive suitable direction and guidance about the school's expectations, for example to improve the quality of teaching, and to ensure rigour in assessment, target-setting and tracking of progress. Meetings of the leadership team focus primarily on operational matters and do not give suitable consideration to pupils' progress and learning and teaching.

The school's quality assurance arrangements lack rigour. There is no systematic programme of lesson observations and scrutiny of work that would provide first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there is not a sharp understanding of the school's strengths and relevant areas for improvement. The school does not identify key priorities well enough or plan effectively to strengthen provision and improve outcomes for pupils.

The school management team provides committed and reflective leadership. This team supports colleagues well, in particular to strengthen team planning arrangements. In a few areas, this approach contributes to improving practice. However, this work is at a very early stage and has had limited impact on improving the quality of provision and the standards that pupils achieve.

Professional learning opportunities are underdeveloped. The school encourages staff to reflect on their work and to engage in mentoring activities with other colleagues. Most staff have undertaken relevant training in aspects such as safeguarding and first aid provision. However, the school does not have suitable performance management arrangements which help to determine specific objectives for all members of staff and to identify relevant training to support their professional learning.

The governance team shows a strong commitment to improving all areas of the school's work. Members of this team are beginning to take appropriate steps to strengthen leadership arrangements across the school and to improve the team's ability to oversee, support and challenge the school effectively. However, at present, the team does not receive suitably detailed and comprehensive information about the school's work and does not have a clear understanding of pupils' standards and progress.

The governance team monitor all budgets robustly. They allocate money directly to fund agreed priorities to achieve the school's primary aims. There are sufficient suitably qualified staff to deliver the Steiner curriculum. The school makes effective use of its resources to provide a suitable learning environment. However, the premises and limited facilities restrict learning in certain areas such as science activities.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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