



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

**A report on
Tŷ Bronllys**

Date of inspection: May 2018

by

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

About Tŷ Bronllys

Tŷ Bronllys is an independent special school situated just outside Brecon. The school provides residential education and care for pupils aged 8 to 19 years who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school opened in 2007 and is one of four schools owned by the Orbis Education and Care group.

Currently there are nine pupils attending the school. All pupils are male and all are placed by local authorities from Wales. All pupils have a statement of educational needs. Most pupils reside at the registered on-site children's home. Most pupils have English as a first language.

The head of education has been in post since May 2017. A director of education oversees the education provision across the company's schools. There are two class teachers and five full-time learning support assistants. The education team is supported by a clinical team including a speech and language therapist, behaviour specialist, occupational therapist and clinical technicians.

The school's last full inspection was in October 2011.

Summary

The school has effective arrangements to promote pupils' wellbeing and learning during their time at the school. The well co-ordinated joint working between the school's education, residential and multi-disciplinary teams supports a highly consistent approach by staff to helping pupils' to manage their complex needs. Teachers and support staff understand pupils' needs well and build strong and productive working relationships with them. As a result, all pupils feel safe at the school. They make strong progress in improving their behaviour and learn important skills that help them to lead a more independent life. Leaders at the school provide strong leadership and a vision for the school that focuses on providing a safe and secure environment for pupils. They have effective arrangements for quality assuring the work of the school. As a result, the school has a strong track record in making improvements to its provision to benefit pupils.

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

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good

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 Develop the range of learning experiences to meet the needs of pupils less tolerant of the classroom environment
- R2 Ensure the purpose of assessment is clear and identifies precisely what pupils need to do to make progress
- R3 Provide teaching staff with opportunities for professional development that have a clear focus on teaching and learning

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.

Estyn will invite Tŷ Bronllys to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how joint working between the education, residential and multi-disciplinary teams supports the provision for individual pupils, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

All pupils who attend the school are severely autistic and most have behaviours that are highly challenging. Most pupils have had disrupted periods of education prior to starting at the school. As a result, there is great variation in their starting points and learning ability. Due to their individual needs, pupils' attainment and achievement need to be judged on an individual pupil basis. It is not possible to compare the school's performance with national averages.

In this context, nearly all pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Nearly all pupils achieve their individual learning targets in school and in the community. They gain suitable accreditation for a wide range of achievements in areas such as physical exercise, food technology and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils make particularly strong progress in developing relevant communication and social skills which help them to become more independent in their daily lives. Most pupils communicate confidently using signs and physical actions in order to express their wishes. They respond constructively to teachers and support staff using non-verbal cues such as touch, gesture and turn-taking, and interact positively and politely with visitors to the school.

In lessons and around the school, many pupils follow staff instructions well. They respond appropriately to questions and demonstrate good listening skills. A minority make exceptional progress in their communication skills due to the well-planned specialist support they receive from staff.

Many pupils develop valuable social skills through regular access to community activities such as shopping, swimming and cycling. Older pupils, for whom it is appropriate, develop their social skills effectively through accessing work experience in a work skills centre owned by the organisation. Through this experience, they gain a sound understanding of the world of work and develop the ability to relate to others in a different context appropriately. A few pupils apply these skills successfully in the wider community, for example at a local café and pet shop.

Nearly all pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills suitably through gardening and cooking sessions, for example. Most pupils develop their physical skills well through regular timetabled activities that are well-matched to pupils' interests and abilities, such as tennis, yoga, and archery.

Nearly all pupils develop valuable skills that enable them to live more independently in areas such as food preparation, shopping and personal care. In lessons, a few pupils make independent choices in response to staff questions, for example when asked to decide on the facts for a poster about ocean life and the pictures to accompany it.

Most pupils make worthwhile progress in developing their reading, writing and numeracy skills at levels that are appropriate to their ability. Around half of pupils

write their names independently, while others need the support of hand over hand guidance. A minority of pupils follow successfully a text read by the teacher and show their understanding by answering follow up questions or locating picture cues. Pupils develop relevant numeracy skills using basic operations and number recall.

Most pupils make suitable progress in their use of ICT skills. The majority of pupils use tablets and desktop computers confidently when selecting information or choosing songs and videos. In lessons around half of pupils use the interactive whiteboard purposefully to answer questions and write their names.

Because of the complexity of their needs, most pupils progress to specialist residential provision when they leave the school. The beneficial progress that pupils make at the school in a wide range of skills enables them to start this next stage of their lives with greater independence and confidence.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Over time, nearly all pupils at the school make strong progress in developing the skills and strategies they need to understand their feelings and manage their behaviour successfully. Pupils respond very well to the school's effective approaches to managing challenging behaviour and the interventions of skilled and dedicated staff. As a result, there have been no exclusions at the school for the past three years.

Pupils' working relationships with staff are a significant strength of the school. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure at the school. Pupils know staff will support and understand their needs when they become upset or worried. The high levels of trust that pupils have in staff contribute positively to the development of their confidence and self-esteem. In turn, this enables pupils to try new experiences and accept change more readily.

Many pupils engage cheerfully with visitors to school by greeting and responding to them appropriately. They respond confidently to their questions and show a good understanding of social conventions in their interactions with them.

Many pupils improve their understanding of the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet. For example, they access a wide range of activities during the school day to support them to keep healthy and fit, including canoeing, gardening and walking. Many pupils make healthy choices at lunchtimes and throughout the school day. This helps them to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to take on relevant roles and responsibilities in school and in the community, for example running the school's mobile tuck shop, the 'tuck truck', and holding coffee mornings for a cancer charity and for parents.

Many pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning during their time at the school because of the well co-ordinated support they receive. They enjoy coming to school despite the negative experiences of learning they have had in the past. The majority of pupils arrive punctually for lessons at the start of the day. They focus well on tasks and respond positively to staff instructions and guidance. The majority understand classroom routines well and move around the school confidently to fetch

their equipment and tidy up after activities. However, a minority of pupils who are less tolerant of the classroom do not engage consistently well in lessons and miss opportunities to consolidate or extend their learning.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their independence during their time at the school. They improve important personal care skills and become less reliant on staff to support them in lessons and during break times. This has significant benefits for their wellbeing and personal dignity and prepares them well for a more independent life when they leave school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 in full.

The school provides a suitable variety of learning experiences that are generally tailored well to meet the needs and abilities of pupils. For younger pupils, the curriculum focuses appropriately on the delivery of literacy and numeracy skills for nearly all pupils. For older pupils, there is a valuable emphasis on the provision for life skills that prepares pupils well for a more independent life when they leave school.

The school broadens the curriculum provision available to individual pupils based on their readiness to engage with a wider range of activities as they move through the school. This includes promoting access to a beneficial range of activities in the local community, such as horse-riding, swimming at a public pool, and shopping in supermarkets and gardening centres. These activities support the development of pupils' social engagement and their understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

The education team works very productively with residential and multi-disciplinary staff to plan for the development of pupils' wider skills. This enables most pupils to make strong progress in their communication and social skills from their starting points. The provision for the development of pupils' communication skills in particular is a strength across the school.

Where relevant, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to develop useful work-related skills that support the development of their confidence and self-esteem. For example, around half of pupils access external work experience placements, including placements at a local nature reserve and pet shop. Similarly, the school provides purposeful opportunities to develop pupils' sense of responsibility through internal work-related experiences such as the school's mobile tuck shop.

The school makes strong provision for pupils to learn and apply literacy and ICT skills in line with their needs and abilities. However, the opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills progressively in real life contexts are underdeveloped.

The school is beginning to plan learning experiences that include more innovative approaches to meeting the needs of pupils who are less tolerant of the classroom environment. For example, staff have recently developed a school garden to provide an external learning environment. However, this work is at an early stage of development and the range of opportunities for pupils to pursue their learning outside the classroom is too limited.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers and support staff have a strong understanding of the complex needs of their pupils. All staff work well together to promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. They foster caring and respectful working relationships with pupils and manage pupils' behaviour effectively and sensitively. Over time, this well co-ordinated approach enables nearly all pupils to improve their understanding of how to manage their behaviour.

Teachers produce detailed plans and schemes of work, which take close account of pupils' needs and skills development. Generally, staff use their knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs to plan activities and tasks that are matched appropriately to their interests. Lesson objectives clearly identify individual pupil targets and teachers structure learning activities suitably around these. However, in a few cases, pupils' targets are not sufficiently challenging or purposeful.

Teachers use questioning skilfully to ensure that this is related carefully to pupils' levels of understanding and builds their confidence in their own responses. All staff provide pupils with consistent and encouraging verbal feedback that helps them to maintain their focus and remain on task. However, in many cases the purpose of teachers' assessment is not clear and does not help to identify what pupils need to do next to achieve their learning goals.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school has highly effective arrangements to promote the progress and wellbeing of pupils throughout their time at the school. This aspect of the school's provision is an outstanding feature of the school. It ensures that pupils succeed in completing their placements at the school even though many have a history of placement breakdowns at their previous schools.

Staff assess all pupils over an extended period when they first join the school. This provides the school with detailed and comprehensive information that includes pupils' current levels of attainment, as well as valuable assessments from the school's multi-disciplinary team on pupils' wider needs. This information enables staff to set relevant programme aims for pupils and provides them with valuable strategies to support pupils' communication, behavioural and physical needs.

The school has robust systems to monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour and to track their progress against their personal targets. As a result, leaders are able to identify quickly when interventions are needed and to implement new strategies and approaches. Where necessary, this includes beneficial input from the school's speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and behaviour assistant.

The well co-ordinated approach to multi-disciplinary working is a key reason for the progress pupils make in reducing instances of challenging behaviour and improving their social engagement over time. Regular meetings of the clinical, education and residential teams chaired by the head of education provide valuable opportunities for staff to review pupils' progress, share important information and make any necessary adaptations to pupils' behaviour support plans and timetables. Detailed reports identify relevant actions, which are reviewed regularly. As a result, staff from across the school share a highly consistent and effective approach to meeting pupils' complex needs.

Members of the clinical and residential team work closely with education staff to inform the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. Where appropriate, this information is used to inform targets on pupils' individual education plans. This helps to direct the planning of learning experiences that meet pupils' specific needs, for example when pupils have particular requirements relating to their personal care.

Staff take close account of pupils' preferences when planning the provision for individual pupils. They observe carefully pupils' responses to establish their likes and choices and include these wherever possible to encourage their engagement and participation. For example, the school ensures that all pupils have suitable opportunities to participate in regular physical exercise that appeals to their interests and abilities. This highly personalised approach is very effective in ensuring that all pupils make strong progress in developing an understanding of health and wellbeing as this relates to their own needs.

The school makes suitable provision for pupils to take on positions of responsibility that help promote the development of pupils' social and communication skills. For example, pupils prepare lunch alongside the school chef and deliver these meals to their peers. All pupils have regular opportunities to access the community as part of their timetable to practise their skills in the community by purchasing ingredients to cook meals of their own choice.

The school has recently introduced a series of 'rich task' days to enable opportunities for pupils to use their creativity while working together collaboratively. These include worthwhile projects such as developing a soap-making enterprise and improving aspects of the school environment.

The school has highly effective arrangements to communicate with parents and carers about the day-to-day progress of their children according to their individual preferences. These include regular phone calls, emails and the school's social media page. Helpful annual reports provide detailed information about pupils' progress for parents, carers and local authorities.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The school is one of a group of four schools owned by the proprietor. This enables the head of education to benefit from strong support provided by senior leaders within the wider organisation, particularly from its director of education. Leaders across the company have a clear strategic vision for the school, based on the school's aim of providing a safe and secure school environment that encourages individuality, confidence and self-esteem.

The head of education provides energetic and enthusiastic leadership. She is highly visible around the school and acts as a positive role model for pupils and staff. Together with the director of education, she communicates the school's vision very effectively. All staff know and understand their responsibilities well. Regular meetings of education, residential and multi-disciplinary team members ensure that there is effective communication that focuses clearly on the wellbeing and progress of pupils.

The school has robust arrangements to quality assure its work on a regular basis. This includes termly opportunities for staff to review pupil progress and achievements, lesson observations and work scrutiny. The school has robust mechanisms to draw on the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff. These activities provide leaders with a very wide range of first-hand evidence to review the work of the school.

Daily and weekly meetings of the education team provide staff with purposeful opportunities to give feedback to leaders and contribute to the school's self-evaluation activities. As a result, the head and director of education have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Generally, areas for improvement link well to priorities identified in the school's improvement plans and leaders ensure that actions are funded appropriately. This commitment means that the school has a strong track record in addressing Estyn recommendations from previous monitoring visits.

The school has established beneficial strategic partnerships with other schools within the group. This has strengthened arrangements for quality assurance and allows leaders to share effective practice in a range of areas. For example, the school has recently reviewed its approach to work scrutiny and the curriculum at key stage 2. It has created beneficial opportunities for pupils from the school to work together with pupils at another school and benefit from its facilities, for example when pond-dipping or tractor-driving.

The school invests suitably in professional training that focuses on meeting the specialist medical and wider needs of its pupils. Leaders have a strategic approach to developing staff within the organisation to meet the needs of pupils and ensure continuity of support for them. Induction processes and training ensure that all staff receive appropriate and up-to-date training across a comprehensive range of relevant areas. Teachers have developed productive relationships with staff from a local specialist college to peer review each other's lessons. However, overall, planned opportunities for staff to extend their knowledge and understanding of issues to do with teaching and learning are underdeveloped.

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:

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