



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

A report on
Priory Talocher School

Date of inspection: July 2021

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Priory Talocher School

Priory Talocher is an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and associated needs. It is located on the outskirts of Monmouth, and is administered by Priory Education Services, which has over 30 schools and specialist colleges across England and Wales.

The school is registered for up to 60 pupils aged 7 to 19 years. There are currently 60 pupils on roll, each of whom has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The majority of pupils are placed by Welsh local authorities; a minority are placed by English local authorities. Around one-quarter of pupils are looked after by their local authority.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse trends in performance over time because of the individual needs of the pupils.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2018. In July 2019, the school made a material change to its registration to admit pupils with ASD as their primary area of need. The school was last inspected in February 2020. Since then, the number of pupils on roll has increased from 49 to 60. The school now employs its own therapeutic team that includes a speech and language therapist, an art therapist, and a counsellor, to support the work of the education team.

In July 2021, the Welsh Government requested Estyn to undertake a focused visit of the school, with a particular focus on the ability of the school to manage pupil behaviour and the impact of this on the school's provision of an appropriate curriculum for pupils. Inspectors visited the school on 6 July 2021 to assess the school's compliance with relevant aspects of standards 1 and 3 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. During the inspection, inspectors undertook learning walks, met with pupils and staff, and scrutinised records and documentation.

Strengths

Overall, inspectors found no evidence to suggest the school does not comply with standard 3 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. In addition, inspectors found no additional areas of non-compliance with standard 1 further to those noted in the core inspection of February 2020. Inspectors did not inspect these aspects on this visit. Therefore, these areas of non-compliance remain in place.

- The school has suitable processes and structures for safeguarding pupils. Relevant policies are detailed and are reviewed regularly. Members of staff understand how to report safeguarding concerns where these arise.
- Senior staff monitor behavioural incidents regularly to track the frequency of these across the school. Staff evaluate these appropriately by phase and according to individual pupils' needs.
- The school has responded appropriately to guidance received during the core inspection and has strengthened arrangements for recording and monitoring incidents involving physical intervention.
- The designated safeguarding person (DSP) has a secure understanding of safeguarding and provides clear leadership, guidance and advice to other members of staff.
- The deputy headteacher with responsibility for progress and attainment liaises regularly with the DSP and engagement officer to review the provision for individual pupils whose behaviour causes concern. This includes adjustments to pupil groupings and timetables, as well as adjustments to the level of staffing to support pupils.
- Pupils' case files include relevant documents to help staff support and manage pupils' challenging behaviours, including individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans.
- Daily briefings provide regular opportunities for staff to share safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.
- The school has suitable processes to monitor the attendance and engagement of learners and to identify appropriate interventions.
- Staff receive suitable training to support behaviour management and their understanding of techniques to defuse challenging situations.
- Since the core inspection, the school has reviewed key aspects of its provision to support the emotional needs of pupils who are not ready to learn when they join the school or arrive for lessons. This includes relevant training to support staff's understanding of therapeutic and trauma-informed approaches to enhance teaching and learning.
- The school has recently strengthened its provision for professional learning on the range of needs faced by pupils, for example on barriers to communication, and autism. This is helping staff to identify where pupils may need more specialised input from members of the school's therapeutic team, or where it is appropriate to provide support themselves.
- On the day of the inspection, pupils engaged politely with staff, visitors and each other. In lessons, pupils focused well on tasks set

Areas for development

The school should:

- Continue to address areas for development in teaching and the curriculum identified during the core inspection.
- Provide a stable team of teachers and support staff to ensure consistent approaches to supporting pupils and managing behaviour across the school.
- Ensure that all documents held in pupil files are complete and up-to-date to ensure staff have access to all relevant information in one place.
- Further improve the quality of information provided in records of incidents involving challenging behaviour and physical interventions.
- Extend the provision of therapeutic approaches to include all pupils at the school, not just those whose statement sets out the entitlement to a specific area of therapy.
- Strengthen the school's professional learning programme by ensuring this sets out a clear strategy to meet staff's development needs over time and includes details of costs and other resource implications associated with it.
- Improve the attendance of secondary-aged pupils.
- Improve the quality of classrooms and the exterior of buildings across the school to provide an inspiring and attractive learning environment for all pupils.
- Ensure that information on safeguarding is available to visitors to the school, and improve the visibility of guidance around the school for staff, visitors or pupils on who they should contact if they have concerns.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

At the time of the core inspection, inspectors noted that although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards Regulations (Wales) 2003 the school should:

- Ensure it has a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively [1(2)]
- Provide personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos [1(2)(f)]
- Ensure lessons are well planned, teaching methods effective and suitable activities used; ensure class time is managed wisely [1(3)(d)]

Inspectors did not inspect these aspects on this visit. Therefore, these areas of non-compliance remain in place.

Standard 2: The spiritual, moral, and cultural development of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 2.

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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 4.

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 continued registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government 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 limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

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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