



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

A report on

Marlowe St David's Education Unit

Date of inspection: February 2022

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Marlowe St David's Education Unit

Marlowe St David's Education Unit is an independent special school situated in north Pembrokeshire. The proprietor is Marlowe Child and Family Services Ltd. The school is registered to admit up to 16 pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).

The school provides education for young people aged 11-18 years who live in the company's children's homes. There are currently seven pupils on the roll of the school. Nearly all pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). All the pupils are looked after by local authorities in England or Wales and all reside in one of the proprietor's children's homes. All of the pupils have English as their first language.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2018 and the school's last core inspection was in January 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

The school provides a calm and welcoming atmosphere for pupils with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Teachers and learning support assistants have a clear understanding of the needs and abilities of their pupils. They have high expectations of pupils' social and academic outcomes. They build effective and purposeful working relationships with pupils that enable them to develop resilience, gain in confidence and improve their readiness for learning. This helps pupils to make steady progress in their learning and personal and social development skills.

The school provides a flexible, broad and balanced curriculum that is well-suited to the needs, abilities and interests of pupils. Older pupils are offered an appropriate range of relevant qualifications and experiences, which allow them to follow a curriculum pathway that meets their needs and interests suitably. As a result, most pupils access relevant qualification routes that support post school experiences.

The headteacher provides reflective and supportive leadership. She has a clear vision for the school and is developing an open and engaging culture. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and current improvement priorities at the school, and these are shared appropriately with staff.

Areas for development

The school is developing appropriate outdoor learning areas. This provides pupils with opportunities to develop their well-being, teamwork and practical skills. However, the school building is worn, and this impacts on the learning environment for the pupils. Estyn will therefore request an additional inspector visit the school to assess the suitability of the school building and compliance with the relevant Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Staff at the school work well together to ensure that they meet the diverse needs of pupils. However, opportunities for staff to share good practice with each other and from other schools are limited.

Leaders at the school have demonstrated resilience and dedication throughout the pandemic and in the face of other challenges. Staffing challenges at the time of the monitoring visit limit the headteacher's ability to work strategically.

The school has made satisfactory improvement to the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) resources. However, opportunities to ensure that ICT has an impact on pupils' standards remain underdeveloped.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Improve access to IT across the curriculum
- R3 Marlowe Child and Family Services Ltd to provide stable staffing structure across the school
- R4 Develop opportunities for staff to share good practice internally and from other local schools

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

Recommendation 1: Finalise the personal social health and education policy to reflect the needs of the pupils and amend the scheme of work in line with the amendments in the policy

Leaders have ensured that the school has made good progress in meeting this recommendation.

The school has established an effective policy and curriculum that meets the needs of pupils well.

The personal social health and education (PSHE) curriculum is co-ordinated by a lead teacher that has overall responsibility for the planning, implementation and review of the curriculum. The co-ordinator supports teaching staff with the delivery and assessment of PSHE. As a result, the curriculum is well structured and understood. It develops pupils' well-being and skills effectively.

The school's PSHE curriculum allows pupils beneficial opportunities to develop their resilience and an awareness of how to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. These include skills that pupils need to progress into the next stage of their lives. Pupils are offered opportunities to learn about a broad range of appropriate themes such as managing emotions confidently and the consequences of risk-taking activities.

The PSHE curriculum is delivered using a variety of interesting approaches across the school. These include focused opportunities within lessons, 1:1 work with a key worker and off-site events. The school also affords useful opportunities for pupils to benefit from sessions by external providers such as the local community police officer.

Teaching staff have benefited from professional learning to develop their understanding and skills in delivering a valuable PSHE curriculum.

The school provides useful opportunities for pupils to contribute their views on the PSHE curriculum offer. This includes evaluating resources and identifying approaches that best meet their needs. Pupils engage well in these activities.

Recommendation 2: Review the curriculum offer, especially for older pupils

Since the core inspection, leaders at the school have reviewed the curriculum offer to ensure that it meets the needs, abilities and interests of all pupils. Recently, further work has taken place to meet the needs of older pupils at the school, such as increased opportunities for work related study and experiences. Curriculum plans for older pupils have recently been implemented, but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

The school has increased the range of worthwhile qualifications on offer. This includes GCSE level qualifications as well as entry and pre-entry level qualifications.

The Marlowe School's Character Curriculum is a strength. It provides additional development of key skills, character strengths and values that pupils will need to become independent successful adults. This includes qualities such as curiosity, empathy, respect, tolerance and team work.

Recommendation 3: Plan effectively for the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum

When planning the development of the curriculum, leaders have provided appropriate guidance for staff in integrating literacy, numeracy and communication technology skills. Literacy and numeracy skills are clearly planned for and embedded in all lessons.

Progress in these areas is tracked carefully to ensure that pupils continue to develop appropriately. However, the planning or integration of ICT skills across the curriculum is still at an early stage of development.

Recommendation 4 : Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement processes by evaluating all available data

Leaders have made good progress in the context of the challenges presented by the pandemic, in meeting this recommendation.

The headteacher shares a clear vision for the school and ensures valuable strategies for the next steps in the school's improvement journey.

Since the core inspection, the school has taken several useful actions to strengthen the link between the use of data and self-evaluation and improvement planning. There is now a strong emphasis on data analysis, alongside lesson observations, and consultations with pupils. These actions include purposeful monitoring and assessment against specific pupil targets.

The school has developed an effective and supportive programme of lesson observations, which focus appropriately on pupils' additional learning needs. This programme, coupled with valuable professional learning activities, has improved practice. At this stage the headteacher has undertaken all lesson observations to

ensure consistency of approach and evaluation. At present, opportunities for peer observation are underdeveloped.

The headteacher has a clear view of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school. This has helped the school to strengthen aspects such as the vocational offer at the school and the outdoor learning environment.

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, 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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 3.

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

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 buildings provide reasonable resistance to penetration by rain, snow, wind and moisture from the ground
- ensure that classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state
- ensure a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration
- ensure that there is appropriate flooring and that it is in good condition

Standard 6: The provision of information

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 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.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([Estyn Site](#))

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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