



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

A report on

Talocher School

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh

About Talocher School

Talocher School is an independent school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and associated needs. The school is located on the outskirts of Monmouth, and is administered by Aspris Children's Services, which is part of the portfolio of the Waterland group, a private equity investment company. The school was formerly known as Priory Talocher School.

The school is registered for up to 60 pupils aged 7 to 19 years. There are currently 38 pupils on roll, each of whom has an individual development plan (IDP), statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

The school's last core inspection was in February 2020. At this time, the school did not comply fully with Standard 1 of the Independent School Standards Regulations (Wales) 2003, the quality of education provided by the school. Since the core inspection, there have been many changes to the leadership, staffing and therapeutic teams. Following a request from the Welsh Government, inspectors made an unannounced visit to the school in July 2021 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.

HMI also visited the school in May 2022 to conduct an annual monitoring visit. At the time of this visit, the school had made limited progress against the recommendations from the core inspection and additional areas of non-compliance were identified.

The school did not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below for each standard:

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

The school did not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school was required to:

- 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)]
- ensure there is full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age [1(2)(a)(i)]
- ensure that where pupils have a statement, the education provided fulfils its requirements [1(2)(e)]
- ensure that lessons are well planned, teaching methods effective, suitable activities used and class time is managed wisely [1(3)(c)]

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school did not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school was required to:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school which complies with Welsh Government Guidance [3(2)(b)]
- prepare and implement a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving [3(2)(d)]
- have and implement a satisfactory written policy on First Aid [3(6)]
- deploy school staff in such a way as to ensure the proper supervision of pupils [3(8)]

Following this visit, the school were asked to produce a post-inspection action plan. A team of HMI visited the school in January and June 2023 to discuss the school's progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in December 2023 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previously non-compliant standards.

Main findings

Strengths

Since the time of the monitoring visit in 2022, the school has made strong progress in responding to the recommendations and areas of non-compliance. The school is now compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Staff at Talocher School understand their pupils' needs very well. They have strong working relationships with all pupils and treat pupils with equality and dignity.

Aspris Children's Services has made significant investment in the school. This has enabled leaders to improve the premises and resources in the school as well as ensuring that the school has appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

The school effectively monitors behaviour over time and implements timely and beneficial actions to improve pupil behaviour across the school. As a result, the behaviour of pupils across the school has improved significantly.

Leaders have strengthened the referral processes for admission to ensure that the provision is appropriate to the individual needs of the pupils being admitted. This has enabled the school to ensure that they are better able to meet the needs of the pupils and take a more strategic approach to the professional learning of staff.

There is an assured ethos of safeguarding at the school, which impacts positively on pupils' well-being. There are robust safeguarding processes in place to report safeguarding concerns, and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. Staff are conscious of school measures and of their duties and responsibilities regarding safeguarding.

Areas for action

The school has strengthened its quality assurance and improvement planning processes. This evidence has been used effectively to improve the consistency of teaching and the wider provision. Currently, these processes do not focus well enough on the progress pupils make.

The school has a suitable focus on meeting the emotional, health and social needs of all pupils. The well-qualified therapy and well-being intervention team offers a valuable range of support for pupils which includes counselling, art therapy, play therapy and emotional literacy. However, the school has not yet evaluated the impact of these activities on pupils' wellbeing and progress in learning.

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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect 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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 6: The provision of information

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Recommendation regarding continued registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government 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 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

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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This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).