A report on

Mynydd Haf

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Mynydd Haf

Name of provider	Mynydd Haf School
Type of school	Independent Special
Proprietor	Keys Group Plc.
Age range	11-17
Boarding/Residential provision?	No
Religious character	No
Number of pupils on roll	23
Pupils of statutory school age	23
Number in nursery classes	0
Number in sixth form	0
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs	100%
Date of headteacher appointment	October 2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	NULL
Start date of inspection	23-26 May 2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

  a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Pupils who attend Mynydd Haf school respond well to the supportive and nurturing environment. A majority of pupils make suitable progress during their time at the school accessing a range of learning experiences that reflect the wide range of pupils' needs, abilities, and interests well. However, due to substantial shortcomings in inspection area 3, teaching and learning experiences and inspection area 4, care, support and guidance, pupil progress is limited in important areas.

Most pupils make appropriate progress in their communication and social skills. As they develop their confidence, they build on these skills and benefit from a range of off-site activities to support their learning. However, the teaching of personal, social and health education curriculum remains too variable across the school.

Over time, many pupils improve their academic skills suitably allowing them to access a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditation. This supports pupils' aspirations for post school destinations to college, further training or employment well .

Leaders promote a supportive and nurturing ethos and a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, they provided high levels of stability for many of their pupils.

Currently the ability of leaders to plan for improvements at the school is underdeveloped. As a result, quality assurance and improvement planning processes are inconsistent.

The school does not fully comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Shortcomings in pupils' progress in learning, as well as the safety and well-being of pupils, is inadequate and a cause for concern. Given the non-compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the Welsh Government may wish to recommend formally to the school that it should not accept new pupils at the school until these matters have been addressed.

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 does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- 1(2)(f) provide personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos
- 1(3)(c) provide well planned lessons with effective teaching methods and suitable activities and manage class time wisely
- 1(3)(e) demonstrate teachers have the appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught
- 1(3)(h) provide teaching which encourages pupils to behave responsibly

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- 2(b) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong, and to respect the law

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- 3(2)(b) prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school which complies with Welsh Government Guidance 272/2021 Keeping Learners Safe
- 3(2)(d) 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(7) deploy school staff in such a way as to ensure the proper supervision of pupils

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 does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- 7(j) provide written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to the panel hearing

Recommendations

R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003

R2 Improve the quality of leadership

R3 Improve assessment and monitoring systems across the school

R4 Ensure that arrangements for quality assurance and governance focus on school improvement and improving the quality of teaching

R5 Improve consistency in planning and teaching across the school

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Parliament will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

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

Learning

Pupils attending the school have a wide range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and associated learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils have a history of poor attendance, exclusion and significant gaps in their learning prior to joining the school. For many pupils, the impact of the pandemic has exacerbated their needs. Whilst at the school, nearly all pupils respond well to the nurturing and supportive environment it provides. Over time, the majority of pupils make suitable progress from their initial starting points. In a very few cases, pupils make extremely effective progress. However, due shortcomings in teaching a minority of pupils' progress is limited.

Many pupils make sound progress in their speaking and listening skills. Pupils listen respectfully to staff and each other. For example, pupils discuss how to look after their class tortoises. They explain clearly what and how to feed them to keep them healthy and happy. Many pupils make suitable progress in their reading skills. Over time, their motivation to improve their reading increases and they engage well with a variety of reading materials during lessons. Pupils build their confidence to read in front of their peers with increasing accuracy and fluency. Similarly, many pupils improve their writing skills as they progress through the school. They become increasingly willing to write during lessons and make suitable progress in their letter formation and legibility, and in the quantity and quality of their written work. For example, older pupils design and use persuasive writing skills to produce information brochures about the school.

A majority of pupils develop their numeracy skills appropriately in lessons. They improve their confidence and understanding of basic numerical concepts. For example, pupils enjoy practising these skills across a range of activities such as playing board games and quizzes, and as part of their reward programmes to buy items in the local shops. Many pupils use their numeracy skills to help develop their independent living skills, for example, to budget, shop and make simple meals.

Pupils use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is generally limited to word processing and simple presentation work. Opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills progressively across the curriculum are underdeveloped.

Most pupils make effective progress in their communication and social skills. On entry to the school there is considerable variation in pupils' skills in this area. Pupils respond well to the encouragement and time they have to talk and share their interests and concerns with staff. As pupils become more confident, they extend these skills to their peers well. For example, pupils talk together in a friendly manner whilst cleaning out the huts where the rabbits and guinea pigs live. A majority of pupils develop skills such as turn-taking, improving their tolerance of others' points of view and developing more appropriate communication strategies and language to signal when they feel anxious, overwhelmed or angry. Pupils respond well to activities in the community where they practise these skills.

A majority of pupils develop their thinking skills appropriately across different areas of learning. For example, pupils complete applications for their construction and health and safety cards independently and consider answers to multiple choice questions confidently.

Many pupils develop suitable creative skills. They participate in art activities involving the use of different mediums such as clay, paints and textiles. Pupils demonstrate a sense of pride when their work is displayed around the school. In science, pupils enjoy the opportunity to develop creative thinking through devising follow up experiments on the decomposition of tomatoes.

Many pupils develop suitable physical skills. They enjoy opportunities to access regular off-site activities such as football, swimming and bowling. Equally on site, pupils practise and develop their basketball skills and use the outdoor gym facilities.

In Key Stage 4, many pupils access a suitable range of qualifications which reflect their abilities, interests and aspirations for post school destinations. All pupils access a minimum of three qualifications in English, mathematics and science at a level appropriate to their ability from entry level to GCSE. In addition, and when appropriate pupils can access a broader range of qualifications. which include humanities, art and design and independent living.

Over the last three years, all pupils have transitioned from school to education, employment or college and have sustained their placements successfully. However, opportunities for pupils to access work experience to support a secure understanding of the world of work are limited.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils value the school and build constructive and trusting relationships with nearly all staff which supports their learning effectively. Over time, a majority of pupils develop appropriate skills to concentrate and sustain their engagement in learning. Many respond well to staff instruction and guidance when moving around the school building.

Most pupils feel safe in the school and respond well to the nurturing environment. They welcome visitors to the school, respond to their questions appropriately and engage well when discussing their work. Generally, pupils are polite and respectful around the school. Where routines are clear and well established, pupils develop increasing levels of independence during the school day. For example, during breakfast club pupils are relaxed, chat with their peers and develop relevant independent living skills well.

A majority of pupils are motivated to learn and engage positively with the school's reward system for behaviour and learning. These pupils improve their attitudes and engagement with learning appropriately over time. When necessary, they use the outside area to help manage their emotions well. Although the number of fixed term exclusions has reduced over time, a few pupils show poor attitudes to learning and use inappropriate language during the school day. In addition, a minority of pupils do not respond consistently to the behaviour management strategies used by the staff and behave inappropriately, disrupting their own and others' learning. As pupils

progress through the school, many pupils develop their social skills well and are confident when engaging with staff, peers, and visitors. For example, through team sports such as football, pupils develop their understanding and tolerance of winning and losing. Pupils build positive relationships with their peers based on mutual respect. For example, positive relationships between pupils and staff were strengthened during a short-term residential visit to a local venue. .

A majority of pupils understand the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. Generally, pupils enjoy the opportunity to exercise using the school outdoor equipment and during regular visits to the local swimming pool, mountains and sports facilities. For example, pupils recently reached the summit of Snowdon as part of the Welsh Three Peaks Challenge. However, a minority of pupils regularly smoke during the school day and have fizzy drinks during lessons.

Pupil voice is developing appropriately through the roles of head boy and girl and the school council. These roles allow for pupils to take on responsibilities, to share concerns with leaders and discuss ways of improving the school. For example, pupils have designed and developed the outside area to include a basketball court and outside gym. Most pupils improve their attendance over time compared to their previous educational provision. Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of the inspection area 4(care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Since the last inspection, leaders have made changes to the curriculum to reflect pupils' needs and learning goals. Leaders have developed long-term plans supported by schemes of work centred around the areas of learning and experience as set out in Curriculum for Wales. However, the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) remains underdeveloped and too variable. In addition, there is too much variability in the planning and teaching of lessons across the school as a result this limits the progress pupils make in learning.

As part of curriculum development, leaders have made changes to the use of off-site activities to extend the range of learning experiences available to pupils. For example, pupils enjoy regular opportunities to play football and ten pin bowling at local centres. Where this is effective, nearly all pupils develop appropriate social skills and work well as a team, for example during football sessions. However, the rationale, planning and monitoring of skills development during these activities is too inconsistent.

At Key Stage 4 appropriate curriculum changes ensure that those pupils in their final years of study gain relevant qualifications for their future pathways. For example, pupils achieve a variety of nationally recognised qualifications and accreditations. In addition to curriculum changes, leaders at the school have made changes to assessment methods. For example, they have introduced internal frameworks to measure pupil progress in specific skills as well as using national curriculum progression steps. These changes are very recent, and it is too early to evaluate their impact fully.

Staff at the school know their pupils well. They build positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Where teaching is most effective, these relationships, supported by well-established classroom routines, help many pupils to engage positively in lessons. For example, pupils transition between lessons quickly and calmly. However, teachers' planning does not always link well enough to pupils' academic ability. As a result, a minority of pupils do not engage well enough in classroom-based lessons.

Staff at the school offer pupils positive feedback and encouragement on their work. Where this is most effective teachers use open questioning techniques to support pupils to build on prior learning, and written feedback to support pupils to understand the next steps in their learning. For example, in science lessons staff question pupils' understanding of the process of mummification. However, across the school the quality of feedback is too variable and does not consistently tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Reports to parents and carers are clear and detailed. They provide helpful information on the progress pupils make in managing their behaviours, as well as additional information provided by school leaders, for example progress and improvements in emotional well-being. Parents and carers value these reports in addition to other communication from the school regarding pupil progress, attendance and well-being.

Care, support and guidance

The school has useful processes to assess pupils on entry to the school. It has a secure understanding of their emotional and social needs through work with external agencies and professionals in the local authority and health services and referral information. As pupils progress through the school, leaders track and monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour well. However, processes to assess pupils' academic progress have recently changed and the analysis and use of this information to plan suitable interventions to respond to pupils' individual needs is underdeveloped. In particular staff do not track and monitor pupils' progress against their IEP targets well enough. Support staff work effectively to meet the social, emotional and well-being needs of pupils. Nearly all staff are positive role models for the pupils. For example, they regularly take part in activities with pupils such as the virtual exercise and resilience challenge.

School leaders have introduced arrangements to develop pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyle choices, for example by cooking healthy meals. This helps pupils to improve their understanding of healthy eating appropriately. Furthermore, pupils develop their understanding of the benefits of physical activities through regular off-site timetabled opportunities for sport and exercise. However, staff allow a minority of pupils to smoke during the school day and have fizzy drinks in lessons. These behaviours are not consistently challenged by staff well enough.

Pupils learn how to be part of a community and respect the identities of others around them, for example through the school's accreditation for a framework, which focuses on positive lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans plus other related identities (LGBT+), inclusion and visibility award. However, overall, the planning and teaching of issues related to personal, social and health education are ineffective and do not link well

enough to practice in the school. Pupils smoking explicitly, use of mobile phones and use of inappropriate language are not challenged consistently well by staff throughout the school day. In addition, important issues related to the wider community and the vulnerabilities that pupils may be exposed to such as county lines, extremism, radicalisation and substance misuse are underdeveloped.

Leaders promote safeguarding as a high priority at the school. They have established an ethos where pupils feel secure and listened to and a strong sense of belonging to the school community.

Processes for reporting safeguarding concerns are in place and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. Partnership working with external agencies is effective and provides a co-ordinated approach in the management of complex safeguarding issues at the school.

Staff are aware of school procedures and receive regular training at an appropriate level. Processes for safer recruitment are robust. New members of staff including agency staff receive safeguarding training and information as part of their induction programme upon appointment.

However, although the school's policies for safeguarding are appropriate, the implementation of these policies across the school is inconsistent. In particular, staff do not provide appropriate challenge to pupils leaving the school and during off-site activities to address pupils' smoking, nor do they provide appropriate supervision of these pupils when they do so. In addition, staff do not have suitable strategies to manage pupils' use of personal mobile phones throughout the day or pupils accessing their school transport before the official end of the school day.

As a result, the school' s arrangements to keep pupils safe do not meet requirements and give considerable cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Leaders at the school are committed to securing ongoing improvements for pupils. They are motivated and have secured a strong sense of teamwork and community for staff and pupils at the school. In spite of the challenges presented by the pandemic, they have continued to foster a caring, nurturing environment that meets the needs of their pupils well.

The school has a small number of staff. Due to the limited numbers of teaching staff at the school, middle level leadership roles are underdeveloped. This restricts the capacity of leaders to plan strategically for improvement and to distribute responsibilities effectively across the school.

Self-evaluation processes are inconsistent. Recently there have been several key changes, including arrangements for assessment, the monitoring and tracking of pupil progress and changes to the curriculum. In addition, the school operates too many information management systems leading to duplication of recording and the inefficient use of leaders' time.

A performance management process is in place for all staff. However, the process is not robust and does not support improvement well enough. This restricts the identification of whole school areas for improvement.

The structure and content of lesson observations have been strengthened recently. These provide valuable evidence of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning. However, leaders do not use the information from lesson observations well enough to identify whole school areas for improvement.

Strong partnership working arrangements are well established by leaders with a range of agencies. These include commissioning local authorities, social services, child and mental health service (CAMHS), neurodevelopmental teams, police liaison services and the youth offending service. The school's collaborative working with partner agencies supports pupils social, emotional and behavioural needs well.

Leaders promote safeguarding as a high priority at the school. Links with local authority safeguarding boards are secure. However, inconsistencies in the implementation of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures weaken the provision at the school significantly.

The governing body meets regularly, and the headteacher provides suitable information to governors. Governors provide robust challenge over financial arrangements. However, the governing body does not focus sufficiently on matters to do with teaching and learning to ensure that this is improving at the school.

Professional learning opportunities include mandatory training in important areas such as safeguarding. Staff at the school access a wide range of training on subjects such as the role of a teaching assistant and mental health first aid. The wider organisation requires staff to complete training, which is not linked to practice at the school, for example based on the special educational needs system in England. In addition, leaders do not evaluate the training needs at the school, or the impact of any training completed. As a result, professional learning has limited impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Leaders have responded appropriately to the previous annual monitoring visit recommendations. The school is not fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [Estyn Website](#)