



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

A report on

The Potteries

Date of inspection: December 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About The Potteries

The Potteries is a registered independent school, which opened in July 2013. The classroom is in a large house in Abermule near Newtown, which is also a children's home. The Potteries is an assessment centre; pupils attend a 26-week programme at the school before moving on to long-term placements.

The proprietor, CareTech UK, is a limited company, which owns children's homes across England and Wales. There are currently two male pupils, aged 11-13, on the school roll. Both pupils have looked after child (LAC) status and come from English local authorities. Both have an EHCP. The primary identified need is social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The current headteacher has been in post since 2012. There are 26 support staff across care and education, which includes two managers, one teacher who is also the headteacher.

The school's most recent inspection was in November 2017 and the most recent annual monitoring visit was in September 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

The school provides a nurturing and stimulating learning environment for pupils with a range of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

The headteacher is enthusiastic and has a strong sense of purpose. He has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school.

The headteacher encourages pupils to take interest, enjoy their learning and challenge themselves. He has a robust understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs and fosters extremely positive and trusting working relationships with them. As a result, nearly all pupils make effective progress in managing their behaviours during the time at the school. In addition, the headteacher plans engaging learning opportunities that interest and motivate pupils. These activities are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils have high levels of engagement in their learning.

The school offers a range of exciting educational activities such as scavenger hunts within the locality and visits to the indoor climbing centre in Telford. These visits enhance pupils' learning experiences well and have a positive impact on their well-being.

Areas for development

Whilst the proprietor has ensured that appropriate pre-employment checks for recently appointed care staff are in place, the processes for recording pre-employment checks for teaching staff employed at the school are not robust enough.

The headteacher makes effective use of standardised tests to establish pupils' baseline across a range of skills, and to establish their level of well-being. However, there is a lack of strategic planning across the curriculum to ensure progress in skill areas such as literacy.

Staff from the company's linked children's home provide suitable learning support at the school. These staff have undertaken appropriate professional learning to develop their understanding of pupils' social and emotional well-being. However, many have limited understanding of the relevant strategies and skills to support pupils' formal learning and skills development appropriately.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Improve strategic planning and provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum
- R3 Ensure that support staff have suitable skills and training to meet pupils' learning needs

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Approach the Welsh Government to request a material change at the Potteries school

The school has recently constructed a new building to increase teaching accommodation. This provision will offer additional, flexible learning space. The headteacher has recently approached the Welsh Government to facilitate this material change.

R2. Evaluate the impact of actions to improve literacy across the curriculum to identify priorities for future improvement

Since the last monitoring visit in 2018, the headteacher has taken a range of suitable actions relating to the further development and evaluation of activities to improve pupils' literacy across the curriculum. There is now a clearer focus on the need to monitor the progress of pupils in the development of their literacy skills.

Pre-placement documentation provides the school with a meaningful starting point to evaluate a pupils' level of literacy on entry. This information is supplemented with information from baseline testing carried out when the pupil arrives. As a result, the headteacher accurately identifies the deficits in pupils' literacy skills and devises a plan to respond appropriately to these areas of need. All pupils now have at least two literacy targets in their individual education plan (IEP) and these are bespoke to each pupil's individual needs.

In addition, the headteacher has reviewed the provision for reading. With support from a local secondary school, he has strengthened the range of material available for pupils to read, both in class and for pleasure.

Staff record pupils' opportunities for literacy across the curriculum, for example during educational visits and sports and recreation time. However, these records do not record the quality of these literacy activities or plan for any progression in the level of skill required. The headteacher has accurately evaluated this approach and recognises the need to plan for progression in the skill development of pupils across the curriculum, including their literacy skills.

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 Standard 2.

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

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:

4 © Ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and where appropriate take into account qualifications and professional references in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed.

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 the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendation regarding continued registration

When considering this school's registration the Welsh Government may wish to have regard to the following recommendation:

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 publication. 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).