



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

A report on

Ty Bronllys

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

This report will also be available in Welsh.

About Ty Bronllys

Tŷ Bronllys is an independent special school situated just outside Brecon. The school provides residential education and care for up to 13 pupils aged 8 to 19 years who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC). The school opened in 2007 and is one of five schools owned by the Orbis Education and Care group in Wales and England.

Currently, there are nine pupils on the school roll. Around two thirds of these are boys. All pupils have a statement of educational needs or education, health and care plan and have English as a first language. Many pupils are placed by local authorities from Wales and a minority are placed by local authorities from England. Many pupils reside at the registered on-site children's home.

The head of education has been in post since May 2017. A director of education oversees the education and care provision across the company's schools.

In addition to the head of education, there is a deputy headteacher, two class teachers and four full-time learning support assistants. The education team is supported by a clinical team including a speech and language therapist, behaviour specialist, occupational therapist and clinical technicians.

The school's last full inspection was in May 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

Tŷ Bronllys school provides a nurturing and caring environment that supports the complex needs of its pupils well. As a result, nearly all pupils develop their resilience and improve their engagement in learning effectively during their time at the school.

Throughout the pandemic, education and care staff worked together effectively to enable the school to remain open, keep pupils safe and support their well-being and learning.

Most pupils show interest in their learning. They listen carefully to the teaching staff and follow instructions closely, such as when matching items or choosing a preferred task. Most pupils communicate well using non-verbal cues such as gesture and symbols, as well as key spoken words. They are particularly enthusiastic when making choices and expressing their preferences, for example when using the interactive whiteboard during lessons to express their emotions or evaluate their progress.

Staff are encouraging and enthusiastic and have positive professional relationships with pupils. Almost all teaching staff have a secure understanding of their pupils' context, needs and motivations. They are particularly adept at using this information to help manage pupils' responses and behaviour in both the classroom and outdoor learning environments. They respond appropriately and safely when pupils display behaviours that challenge.

Areas for development

Whilst the school generally has suitable termly planning for the learning of each class, this is age related and not always linked to an individual pupil's specific progression stage. Therefore, teachers' planning over time does not always meet each pupil's specific needs or identify their next steps in learning well enough.

Teachers have a strong understanding of what pupils need to learn in terms of their primary needs and next steps to independence. However, the quality of targets on pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) is too variable. Further, these do not link clearly enough to pupils' next steps and longer-term goals. In a few cases, pupils' targets are too broad and are not sufficiently focused on progressing the small steps of learning required.

Since the last monitoring visit, whilst several worthwhile professional learning activities have taken place with staff, the school has made limited progress in enhancing staff knowledge and skills specifically about teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Improve the target setting and success criteria in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs)
- R2 Strengthen curriculum and lesson planning to enable staff to meet the needs of individual pupils, measure progress over time and plan securely for pupils' next steps in learning
- R3 Enhance the professional learning opportunities for all teaching staff to extend their knowledge and understanding of issues relating to teaching and learning

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Develop the range of learning experiences to meet the needs of pupils less tolerant of the classroom environment

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has continued to take suitable actions to develop the range of learning experiences to meet the needs of pupils less tolerant of the classroom environment.

The learning environment has been altered to focus far more on learning in and through the outdoors. 'Learning pods' have been introduced to replace the previous classroom block and are readily accessible to the enhanced outdoor environment. These pods are relatively compact, taking a few pupils at a time to reduce sensory overload.

The outdoor environment now includes specific learning zones such as a sensory activity area, school shop, nail bar and barbers. Together with the learning pods, the enhanced outdoor environment enables teaching staff to better support those pupils who find it hard to remain in the classroom. Pupils can either complete activities in the outdoor environment or take regular movement breaks. For example, during sessions observed, pupils were able to use large timers successfully to self-regulate a five minute time-out in the sensory garden before returning to the learning pod and re-engaging in their learning. Overall, pupils respond well to this approach.

R2. Ensure the purpose of assessment is clear and identifies precisely what pupils need to do to make progress

The school has recently introduced a commercial progression framework specific to the needs of those pupils with ASC. This framework is helping staff to identify each pupil's learning priorities and to measure their progress in areas such as communication and interaction, social understanding and relationships. There is a lesser focus on monitoring and assessing the development of other skills such as numeracy and creativity.

Further, the setting of targets in (IEPs and weekly learning plans remain variable. Success criteria are not always specific enough or broken down into smaller targets to enable staff to measure progress over time and to plan securely for pupils' next steps in each curriculum area.

R3. Provide teaching staff with opportunities for professional development that have a clear focus on teaching and learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic the opportunity for the school to maintain useful links with other providers for professional development purposes was hindered, with all visits curtailed. As a result, previously planned visits to observe, share and discuss best practice did not take place. Despite this situation, staff have completed other suitable professional learning activities relevant to their role. These activities include attending internal or external sessions focusing on, for example, ensuring a strong awareness of new curriculum developments, training on assistive technology to

support teaching and learning in the classroom, and further training on the use of communication symbols in the wider setting. However, professional learning opportunities for staff to extend their knowledge and understanding of issues relating to teaching skills remain underdeveloped.

R4. Ensure that the outcomes of self-evaluation processes are used robustly to inform improvement planning

The school has a strong record of making improvements to benefit pupils. Its improvement culture is inclusive, with all staff monitoring and evaluating specific areas of progress and identifying areas of improvement on a regular basis.

Staff routinely complete an analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses and identify potential opportunities and threats as part of their termly supervision. However, leaders do not always use this information well enough to contribute to the school's self-evaluation process. For example, there is limited evidence of issues identified by staff in terms of their own professional development in the school's self evaluation report, or in the school improvement plan.

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

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:

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).