

From: [Robert Gairey](#) on behalf of [Enquiries](#)
To:
Cc: [Enquiries](#)
Subject: 10 24 03 FOIA Request - Hillside Secure Unit - response
Date: 31 July 2024 12:17:25
Attachments: [Letter for CIW with Estyn report for Care Inspectorate Wales regarding Hillside Secure Children's Home 2023.pdf](#)

Dear

Thank you for your email, in which you formally request information in regards to Hillside Secure Unit.

When dealing with requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'Act'), Estyn's obligations include:-

1. Confirming or denying whether it holds information of the description specified in the request; and 2. Communicating the information requested to the applicant.

There are a number of exemptions under the Act that impact these obligations. Estyn is required to consider whether an exemption applies in the context of the information being released into the public domain, not just in the context of the information being released to the particular applicant that has requested the information.

If Estyn releases information in response to a Freedom of Information request, this is essentially a decision that the information can be released in response to any similar request from any member of the public.

In response to your request, please find attached the report of our findings related to the education provision at Hillside Secure Unit.

Inspections of Hillside Secure Unit are not Estyn inspections, but those of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). We join their teams at their request to inspect the education provision only, while they retain responsibility for inspecting the overall provision. To safeguard the children within the secure children's home, neither we nor CIW publish these reports, however we are attaching a copy for your reference.

We hope this is helpful.

If you are not satisfied with the decision Estyn has taken regarding your request for information, you are entitled to request that we review the matter. Your request for a review should be addressed to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, and received no later than 20 working days after the date of this communication.

If you are still not satisfied, you also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner through their website:

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/who-we-are/wales-office/>

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Email: enquiries@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Robert Gairey

Swyddog Arweiniol Cyhoeddiadau / Lead Officer: Publications

Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi Dros Addysg A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru His Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales

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Gwefan/Website: www.estyn.llyw.cymru / www.estyn.gov.wales Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth.

Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

Dilynwch @EstynAEF / Follow @EstynHMI

From: Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 9:39 PM

To: Enquiries <Enquiries@estyn.gov.uk>

Subject: 10 24 01 FOIA Request - Hillside Secure Unit

You don't often get email from

Dear Estyn

Please can you supply disclosure of any information held about Hillside Secure Unit, Neath, SA11 1UL between the years September 2021 and July 2024.

With very best wishes



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

Neil Caddy
Care Inspectorate Wales

Estyn report for Care Inspectorate Wales regarding Hillside Secure Children's Home: November 2023

Dear Neil,

In November 2023 Rachel Hackling HMI, Mamta Arnott HMI and Nathan Horleston AI visited Hillside Secure Children's Home in order to inspect education provision on behalf of Care Inspectorate Wales.

This letter contains the text and judgements that Estyn has submitted to Hillside Secure Children's Home about their education provision for inclusion into your report.

For this inspection, Estyn evaluates the provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs Improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Estyn uses the following terms to describe proportions:

nearly all = with very few exceptions

most = 90% or more

many = 70% or more

a majority = over 60%

half = 50%

around half = close to 50%

a minority = below 40%

few = below 20%

very few = less than 10%

Background

On average, learners stay at Hillside for around 13 weeks. Nearly all learners attending the unit have had disrupted education prior to their arrival at Hillside. Most learners have not engaged with education for a considerable period. Nearly all learners have had adverse childhood experiences, which often impede their ability to form stable or trust-based relationships. Many learners have highly complex learning needs and nearly all have to overcome significant barriers to learning. Most learners have underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills.

Learning

Nearly all learners who attend the education sessions at Hillside make at least suitable progress in developing knowledge, understanding and skills during sessions. However, the poor attendance of a minority of learners hinders their progress in learning.

When learners attend sessions, most make sound progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, learners demonstrate a secure understanding of the texts that they read when categorising ideas. They practise calculating percentages and apply this information to their Christmas wish lists, or use their numeracy skills effectively to budget the cost of a car. When they attend sessions, most learners develop their basic digital skills competently. For example, they create spreadsheets, use word processing applications and create music successfully using mixing and recording software.

Learners at Hillside develop beneficial social skills through their interactions with residential and education staff. Many learners engage well with visitors and build strong relationships with staff across the setting. A few demonstrate strong social skills with their peers. A few learners develop critical thinking skills appropriately.

Learners' progress in developing independent living skills is a strength. Most develop a strong awareness of the competencies they will need for their future lives. For example, following a recipe, using an oven timer, selecting and measuring herbs, spices and other ingredients, or budgeting for Christmas gifts.

Staff ensure that nearly all learners leave Hillside education provision with an accreditation or recognised qualification. A few learners go on to successfully complete GCSE or vocational qualifications.

Tracking of learners' progress shows that on average in the 6 years to 2022 learners made good progress in their reading, spelling and numeracy skills. However, the most recent analysis was unavailable.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Many learners usually behave appropriately when in sessions. They engage positively and sustain concentration for short periods of time. Overall, the majority of learners respond suitably to guidance from staff and follow instructions.

Learners value opportunities to make choices and influence their education. For example, they make choices about the curriculum. A few learners represent their peers on the school council. These learners have successfully influenced changes, for example, in modifying timetables. A few learners also contribute to education board meetings. They engage positively in discussions with senior leaders about the quality of provision. As a result of these activities learners gain in self-esteem and confidence.

Overall, learners do not attend education sessions often enough. Learners struggle to get up and arrive at sessions punctually every morning. During the autumn term, attendance was around 70%, which represents a significant reduction since last academic year. This has a significant impact on learners' well-being and progress in learning.

Many learners report that they build positive relationships with staff and enjoy coming to education sessions. They value the flexible approach to groupings to meet their emotional and social needs.

Nearly all learners engage in a range of practical activities to develop skills for their future lives and learn how to stay safe and healthy. They prepare basic meals and value participating in a range of physical activities, such as climbing and using the gym.

Teaching and learning experiences

Nearly all teaching staff have a highly developed understanding of individual learners' emotional and social contexts. This is underpinned by a collegiate working environment in which information relevant to learners is shared effectively. Staff use this understanding as the foundation of strong, trusting relationships which have a clear positive impact on many learners' engagement when in sessions.

The curriculum is adapted to meet learners' needs and contexts at all levels. Entry assessment of learners' ability across core subjects and skills is used to good effect. The level and nature of accreditations are well considered, ranging from Entry Level and Level 1 skills for work and life, through to GCSE maths, English and science. Staff adapt timetables, groupings and activities effectively in response to both learners' immediate contexts and the outcomes of ongoing assessment.

Nearly all teachers have secure subject knowledge directly relevant to the wide range of pathways and qualifications available to learners. This sound professional expertise underpins responsive practice at both classroom and curriculum level. Teaching staff have identified and developed a broad range of good quality, stimulating learning resources which they use to support learners. These are selected and used in response to individual learners' pathways. However, their deeper awareness of how to meet learners' additional learning needs is underdeveloped.

Curriculum plans have a strong, individualised focus on functional skills and skills for life. These range from telling the time, handling money and ordering off a menu, to writing job applications, personal budgeting and menu-planning for healthy eating. Provision for key skills is embedded across all curriculum areas. Middle leaders promote a consistent approach to the development and use of key numeracy and literacy skills. For example, the use of measurement and the four arithmetic operations when planning and making in design technology.

Nearly all staff make good use of assessment to drive learners' progress. In the best examples, spoken and written feedback provides learners with a secure understanding of their current attainment, and clear instructions on how to improve. In these cases, learners respond in a timely fashion to teacher advice, making clear progress. Teachers track learners' attainment within their subject area soundly over time and use this to monitor progress.

The work of other adults, including higher level teaching assistants, in classrooms is effective and is a strength of the provision. Teaching assistants play a significant role both in the sharing and use of contextual information about the learners as well supporting learning during sessions. This is underpinned by beneficial professional communication between staff.

In collaboration with the care provision, education staff complement the curriculum with a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, a recent visit by a spoken word artist and rapper as part of Universal Children's Day. Staff enable learners to take part safely in worthwhile community-based activities where appropriate, such as Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and trips to the local park.

The majority of classrooms and vocational areas are well equipped, provide appropriate access to IT facilities, and are used regularly to good effect in support of the curriculum. A few vocational facilities are not used consistently and are less well maintained.

Care, support and guidance

Staff at Hillside education unit often develop positive relationships with learners, based on a strong understanding of learners' personal histories and social and emotional needs. As a result, when learners are in sessions many of them engage positively with staff and learning activities.

The education team meets daily with the wider centre team for daily briefings to ensure they have up-to-date information about each learner. Education staff use this information purposefully to adapt the day to support learners to engage with education.

Education staff meet regularly to assess learners' needs and set helpful individual targets. Staff monitor these targets through regular team meetings in order to review the progress learners make in engagement and skills development. Although staff have a strong understanding of the progress individual learners make towards these targets, there is a limited understanding of this progress at a whole provision level.

Since the time of the last inspection the centre has strengthened its therapeutic offer with the addition of a range of professionals including an occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, a psychologist and psychiatrist. Further, leaders use links with placing authorities to seek support and guidance from a wider range of professionals, such as an educational psychologist. However, much of the work in this area is very newly established.

Staff record attendance and behaviour of learners diligently. However, staff do not evaluate this information well enough or use it consistently to inform practice at the centre.

The education team supports learners to develop a suitable understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The PHSE (personal, health and social education) curriculum is flexible and allows staff to adapt to the needs and developmental stage of each learner. However, coverage of important aspects of this, such as sexuality and extremism, is not consistent.

Hillside provides worthwhile opportunities for learners to develop independent living skills and skills for their future lives, such as cooking and managing money. The education provision collaborates positively with centre staff, including the resettlement team, to prepare learners for their next steps. For example, through a voluntary programme at an animal rescue centre. Staff provide important experiences and information about careers and the world of work, for example, through first aid courses and activities that link well to their future aspirations.

Staff are very clear about what to do if they have safeguarding concerns about an individual. All staff have had training in care and restraint procedures. Staff across the centre have a consistent and positive approach to the management of risk.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision focussing on developing an education offer that meets learners at their starting points and supports them well towards rewarding outcomes. He has successfully developed a resilient workforce that has the skills to support the well-being of learners with significantly challenging social and emotional backgrounds.

This vision is communicated clearly and shared by staff who demonstrate genuine commitment to ensuring positive learning experiences for all learners at the centre. They work effectively together to motivate learners to engage in learning, and to develop resilience and independence.

Leaders use a range of first-hand information to inform suitably their self-evaluation, such as a sound understanding of learners' starting points, their interests and any barriers to learning gained through assessment and reviews of progress. This information is used well to construct a meaningful curriculum that provides both progression for learners and breadth of offer.

Leaders and education staff track learners' progress and attendance closely. Observations of teaching and learning are used appropriately to monitor the quality of provision for performance management purposes or to support the verification of

outcomes. Together with their knowledge of the learners, this information helps leaders and staff to identify broad areas for development, and the approaches or general professional learning required to address improvement priorities.

Overall, however, self-evaluation processes for teaching and learning and reviews of data are not used well enough to establish precise areas for development. This hinders leaders' ability to identify the most suitable strategies, and the professional development required to bring about improvement. For example, specific training to meet learners' individual additional learning needs, or further enhance teaching and learning. Further, while leaders are broadly aware of the reasons for non-attendance and attendance is monitored closely, this information is not used well enough to establish trends, or precise reasons for non-attendance.

Performance management processes contain suitable objectives and activities for post holders to meet those objectives. Teaching assistants do not currently benefit from individual reviews of their practice to inform their professional development.

The residential and education teams share a commitment to providing a safe and welcoming environment for learners. Likewise, the education provision works effectively with its partner school on strategic and operational development. Where appropriate, partners share effective practice with each other and engage in appropriate professional learning together for their mutual benefit. For example, on behaviour management or trauma-informed practice. There is a beneficial partnership with the youth service that is beginning to support valuable enhancements to extracurricular provision, such as the inclusion of music sessions for learners.

The management board has a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the education offer and provide appropriate challenge. The board has open and robust discussions about the education provision. The strategic management of the education provision ensures that there is sufficient and appropriate provision for education, skills and activities for the full range of learners and that these pathways lead to accreditation or a qualification where possible. Although the learning environment is generally welcoming, a few facilities are in a poor state of repair.

Senior management team meetings are used appropriately to share information relevant to the respective education and residential teams. However, management meetings across the education and residential settings do not consider strategic education matters in sufficient depth. These meetings are not used well enough to collaboratively and quickly address matters that are a cause for mutual concern and benefit to learners' long-term well-being and life chances. For example, ensuring that learners are ready to learn, arrive to sessions on time and attend sessions regularly.

Judgements

Estyn CIF	Judgement
Learning	Adequate and needs Improvement

Well-being and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs Improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs Improvement

Recommendations

R1	Improve the attendance and punctuality of learners	IA2
R2	Strengthen self-evaluation processes so that they have a sharper focus on identifying areas for development	IA5
R3	Develop strategic partnerships across the centre to improve learning and well-being	IA5

Yours sincerely,



Mark Campion

Assistant Director

