



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 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About The Potteries

Name of provider	The Potteries
Proprietor status	CareTech Community Services Ltd
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	4
Pupils of statutory school age	4
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	13/11/2017
Start date of inspection	02/12/2024

School context:

The Potteries is an independent special school, near Newtown in Powys. The school is owned and managed by CareTech Community Services Ltd, a private limited company. The proprietor owns children's homes across Wales, England and Scotland. The school is co-located within a children's home.

The Potteries is an assessment centre; pupils typically attend short-term 26-week programmes at the school before moving on to long-term placements, although some placements are extended up to 39 weeks.

There are currently four pupils on the school roll. Their ages range from 11 years to 16 years. All pupils have looked after child status and come from both Welsh and English local authorities.

The primary identified need of pupils is social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There are 26 support staff across care and education, which includes a manager.

The headteacher has been in post since 2012 and is the only teacher at the school.

Summary

The Potteries is a caring environment where all staff are committed to supporting the needs of their pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe at the school.

Most pupils who attend the Potteries transition into full time education once their placement has ended. This is a strength of the school.

The school offers a broad curriculum, which covers many aspects of the required areas of learning. However, there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications or accreditations at an appropriate level to their ability or for pupils to learn about an important range of subjects and themes, for example science, humanities, sex and relationship and careers.

Staff know their pupils' emotional needs well and have positive professional relationships. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve academically are not always sufficiently high. Further, there is limited capacity for the school to suitably teach a range of subjects to GCSE level.

The headteacher is provided support by the wider organisation. However, quality assurance processes have not ensured that the provision adapts effectively to meet the educational needs of its current pupils.

Leaders have made limited progress with addressing recommendations from previous visits.

There are no comments on pupils' learning, well-being or attitudes to learning. This is because the number of pupils present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual pupils.

The school does not comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2024.

Main evaluation

The Potteries is a warm and welcoming school, where pupils are supported to transition back into full time education.

Curriculum

The curriculum is broad and covers many of the required areas of learning. In particular, the school plans well for pupils to access a range of worthwhile physical activities including rock climbing and visits to local leisure facilities. However, a shared vision for the development of a curriculum that is co-ordinated around the long-term destinations of each child is underdeveloped.

The curriculum provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their wellbeing and creativity, and to develop a positive attitude to learning. A range of trips and visits are used to support the curriculum effectively, for example visits to Chester Zoo and Shrewsbury Abbey. Most pupils access outdoor learning on a weekly basis. However, the planned activities do not always make the most of the specific benefits that learning in an outdoor environment provides.

Opportunities for pupils to learn about science and humanities are very limited. In addition, the allocation of curriculum time for personal, social and health education (PSHE) teaching is inconsistent. Further, the planning for the teaching of PSHE including careers education and relationship and sex education is undeveloped. As a result, pupils miss the opportunity to address important aspects of the subject.

The school suitably supports pupils to raise their aspirations for the future. However, the ability of the school to adequately meet those aspirations through the curriculum is limited. For example, there is limited capacity to teach subjects at GCSE level. Further, there are limited opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation across a range of subjects at appropriate levels.

The quality of the curriculum provided by the school does not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Teaching

The teaching of numeracy is well structured and based upon secure knowledge. Staff establish helpful classroom routines and manage behaviour effectively. However, the school does not have a coherent and co-ordinated approach to develop pupils' skills progressively across the curriculum.

Teachers offer valuable support to pupils when they become stuck with learning tasks. They respond to pupils' questions relating to their work and offer them swift feedback, which enables pupils to gain a sense of achievement. However, lessons are not based closely enough on the skill levels of the individual pupils. As a result, lessons are not challenging enough. Staff expectations of what pupils can achieve academically are not always sufficiently high.

There are no comments on pupils' learning, well-being or attitudes to learning. This is because the number of pupils present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual pupils.

Transition

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to engage in varied learning experiences. Most pupils significantly improve their attendance to school in comparison to their previous school. This is a strength of the school.

In lessons and through off-site activities, teachers give pupils opportunities to develop their social skills particularly well. Pupils develop strong working relationships with staff built upon trust and respect. This is a strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate the ability to listen to those around them appropriately and interact suitably. Many pupils are equipped with strategies to enable them to manage their emotions and a few pupils demonstrate disrespectful behaviours to those around them.

The school produces detailed reports on pupils at regular intervals throughout their placement where progress is reviewed. These reports provide useful information on the holistic progress pupils make in areas of behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning. They support the process of pupils transitioning back to full time education suitably. After their short term placement at the Potteries, most pupils are able to transition back to full time education. This is a strength of the school.

Keeping Learners Safe

The school has a strong emphasis on keeping pupils safe and provides a safe, caring and nurturing environment for them. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe at the school.

The wider organisation provides online training in relevant areas such as safeguarding and the Prevent duty. In a few areas, however, these courses are not sufficiently relevant to those working in education roles within the school or the relevant statutory guidance for schools in Wales.

Leadership

The headteacher is committed and highly invested in supporting pupils at the school.

The headteacher is appropriately supported by the regional lead who has responsibility for a number of other schools within the company. However, recently the framework of governance and scrutiny for the Potteries School has been less frequent. As a result, the wider leadership team has a limited sense of the strengths and areas for development of the school and has not given clear direction to the headteacher.

The headteacher and residential staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress. Due to the small size of the provision, the headteacher relies on a team of support staff to also deliver education within the school. However, this aspect of the provision is not quality assured. As a consequence, leaders are not able to evidence clearly that the provision meets the changing needs of the pupils attending the school.

Leaders have not implemented the necessary changes required to the curriculum offer to ensure that it meets the needs of the current cohort of pupils. Leaders do not consider the impact of provision on standards and progress well enough. Further, progress towards responding to previous recommendations has been limited.

The wider organisation has provided opportunities for a minority of residential staff to gain qualifications in supporting teaching and learning. The headteacher has had limited opportunities for professional development to support them to keep up to date with national developments in education and current education practice. This inhibits them in developing their understanding of appropriate curriculum models and how best to support pupils' learning. Further, staff professional learning and development is not linked well enough to the needs of pupils, the school or individual staff improvement priorities.

The school does not comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2024.

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 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 the proprietor should:

- Ensure that a written policy on the independent school's curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively [2(1)(a)]
- Ensure the written policy, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an IDP or a statement, do not undermine the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and take into account the principles in Part 1 of the Convention [2(1)(b)]
- Ensure that full-time supervised education for all pupils of compulsory school age, which gives pupils experience in the following areas: language, communication, mathematics, science, technology, humanities, health, well-being and expressive arts [2(2)(a)]
- Provide for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner, enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options, and helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential [2(2)(e)]
- Ensure the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress, including providing differentiated opportunities where appropriate, and effective

preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life [2(2)(h)]

- Enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught [2(3)(a)]
- Ensure well planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of learning time [2 (3) (c)]
- Demonstrate that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from those assessments to plan teaching so that pupils can progress [2(3)(g)]

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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 meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations

We have made four recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- R2 Establish effective procedures for quality assurance and improvement planning that focus clearly on pupil progress and the standards they achieve
- R3 Establish ongoing and robust professional learning for staff to effectively deliver the curriculum and meet pupils' learning needs
- R4 Improve curriculum provision so that it covers all areas of learning and enables pupils to study a range of courses at an appropriate level

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Government 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. Welsh Government may then request Estyn to support the school through an improvement process.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

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%

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 (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework

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).