

A report on

The Potteries

**Abermule
SY15 6JH**

Date of inspection: September 2025

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
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	2
Pupils of statutory school age	2
Date of previous Estyn visit	02/12/2024
Start date of visit	25/09/2025

School context

The Potteries is an independent school near Newtown in Powys. The school is owned and managed by CareTech Community Services Ltd, a private limited company. The proprietor owns a number of children's homes across Wales, England and Scotland. The school is co-located with a children's home and staff from the home contribute to supporting education within the school.

The school provides education for up to four pupils aged 8 to 18 who have complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It operates as an assessment centre, with many pupils attending short-term programmes of around 26 weeks before moving to longer-term placements. A few placements are extended to 39 weeks.

There are currently two pupils on roll. Their ages range from 11 to 16 years. All pupils are care experienced and placed by local authorities from Wales and England.

The headteacher has been in post since 2012 and is supported part-time by a recently appointed qualified teacher. In addition, 26 support staff work across care and education, including a manager. Many of these staff contribute to teaching under the supervision and coordination of the headteacher. Six members of support staff hold additional qualifications in supporting teaching and learning.

At the time of the inspection in November 2024 the school did not meet the requirements for the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations. The Welsh Government asked the school to produce a post-inspection action plan to address the areas of non-compliance.

To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below:

Standard 1 – The Quality of Education

- 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)]

A team of HMI visited the school in April 2025 to discuss the school's progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in September 2025 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previously non-compliant standards.

Main findings

Since the core inspection in November 2024, leaders at The Potteries have taken significant steps to strengthen the curriculum across all areas. They have worked systematically to develop a coherent curriculum framework and to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced education.

The school's curriculum policy is now detailed and well structured. It sets out clearly the ethos and aims of the provision and maps out a curriculum that meets statutory requirements while being adaptable to the individual needs of pupils. The policy is supported by thorough schemes of work which provide coherent sequences of learning. These schemes set out clear pathways in literacy, numeracy, science and other key subjects with appropriate opportunities for accreditation from entry level through to level 2 qualifications.

The detail and coherence of the revised schemes of work mean that learning activities are planned more effectively to meet the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with IDPs. The curriculum places strong emphasis on developing life and independence skills as well as preparing pupils for adulthood. For example, pupils work through individual learning passports that cover sport and recreation, food technology, independence skills and curriculum-based targets.. These activities help pupils prepare for adult life by giving them practical experiences that build confidence and readiness for their next steps.

Leaders have also embedded a range of valuable short courses, unit awards and digital literacy awards alongside practical accreditations such as food hygiene, independent living skills and workplace readiness. These provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to gain recognition for their achievements in both academic and vocational areas.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. The headteacher knows their pupils' emotional and social needs well and this knowledge underpins lesson planning and delivery. As a result, pupils engage increasingly well in their lessons and make appropriate progress from their starting points. Timetables demonstrate a careful balance between academic learning, personal development and opportunities to rebuild pupils' confidence in education.

Assessment arrangements have been strengthened considerably. Leaders have implemented a structured framework that ensures pupils' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly. Teachers use assessment information to plan next steps and set meaningful short-term targets. Progress is tracked across all areas of learning and leaders can now demonstrate improvement over time. Although some of these processes are relatively

new, they are already contributing to better sequencing of work and more purposeful planning.

The curriculum also provides pupils with suitable access to impartial careers guidance, initially through a digital platform. Careers schemes of work, individual learner pathways and purposeful work experience opportunities help pupils prepare for adult life. This aspect of the provision has become more consistent and is embedded appropriately within the wider curriculum.

The recent appointment of an additional teacher has increased the school's capacity to deliver a wider range of subjects and has enabled the headteacher to strengthen quality assurance processes. The wider organisation has also supported leaders to plan adaptations to the premises so they can better meet the educational needs of current and future cohorts.

Although the premises are currently suitable for the small number of pupils on roll, leaders also recognise that additional space will be required both to sustain and extend the curriculum as numbers increase towards the maximum permitted and to accommodate the additional member of teaching staff. A new modular building is planned, with construction expected to take only a short time once planning approval is granted. Leaders should apply for a material change to register this accommodation with the Welsh Government as soon as the building is in place.

More urgently, at the time of the inspection, the school was using an external building that forms part of the children's home to educate pupils. This building is not included in the school's registration and the school does not have permission to educate pupils there. It is a material change that requires Welsh Government consent, and leaders should apply immediately to add this building to the school's registration.

Taken together, these actions mean that leaders have addressed the shortcomings identified at the core inspection. The curriculum is now underpinned by detailed and coherent schemes of work, assessment processes are robust and teaching is appropriately planned and delivered. As a result, there is no evidence that the school does not school now meet the Independent School Standards with which it was previously non-compliant. However, immediate action is required to extend the registration of the current premises.

Compliance with the standards 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

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this standard

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

This standard was not considered on this visit

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

This standard was not considered on this visit

The suitability of proprietors and staff

This standard was not considered on this visit

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

This standard was not considered on this visit

The provision of information

This standard was not considered on this visit

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

This standard was not considered on this visit

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 2024.

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 (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 Act 1998.

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