



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

A report on

The Branas School

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

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

About The Branas School

The Branas School provides specialised education and therapy for boys who have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs and moderate learning difficulties. The school is owned and managed by Caretech Ltd.

Currently, there are 18 pupils on the school roll. Nearly all pupils are looked-after by local authorities in England and live in the children's homes operated by Caretech. Nearly all have an education, health and care plan. The children's homes are registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales. All pupils speak English as their first language.

The present headteacher has been in post since January 2018.

Main findings

Strengths

The school has recently had a significant turnover of pupils, amounting to almost half of the pupils on roll. Since then, staff have been undertaking initial assessments to ensure that planning meets the needs of the new pupils appropriately. They have prepared suitable individual plans for all pupils and begun to measure progress made against the initial set targets.

Recent changes to the senior leadership team have improved its capacity to plan and monitor the success of the school, although it is too early to measure the impact on pupils' standards and teaching.

The headteacher has undertaken a comprehensive self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has a clear view of the areas in need of improvement. However, actions to make the changes needed have been slow to progress, mostly due to the recent significant change of pupils on roll.

The school has improved the opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation for their learning. As a result, most pupils at key stage 4 gain a wide range of suitable accreditation for their achievements, including GCSEs in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

The school's classrooms and outdoor areas across two sites are resourced appropriately, and they support pupils' learning well. Staff have a sound understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs and provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills through a wide range of educational activities, including outdoor education and vocational courses.

The school provides an appropriate range of learning experiences for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Areas for development

The recent significant turnover of pupils at the school has required leaders to focus their priorities on assessing needs and making suitable provision. However, leaders have been slow to address the recommendations made at the last annual monitoring visit.

Teaching does not consistently take enough account of pupils' emotional wellbeing. It is not sufficiently flexible to engage and motivate pupils, particularly when they experience periods of anxiety. For example, pupils do not have individualised learning activities, off-site where appropriate, to support their emotional wellbeing better.

Teachers' planning to improve opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum is developing. Despite this, pupils do not practise and develop their skills well enough across the curriculum, including in vocational, enrichment and outdoor pursuits.

The school monitors pupils' progress in relation to their behavioural targets. Leaders regularly analyse data to check for patterns of behaviour. However, they do not use this data well enough to plan appropriate strategies for improvements. As a result, the behaviour of a very few pupils, especially when experiencing periods of anxiety, disrupts the learning of their peers.

Pupils are not regularly punctual to start lessons. This includes arriving to school in good time. As a result, valuable learning time is wasted.

The school does not have permission of the Welsh Government to use part of its site.

Recommendations

The school should:

R1. Ensure that teachers use information on pupils' ability and emotional wellbeing when planning lessons

R2. Improve the assessment of pupils' skills and ensure that planning enables them to develop and practise these skills across the curriculum, including vocational, enrichment and outdoor activities

R3. Ensure that data on pupils' behaviour is used effectively to plan learning experiences that motivate and engage pupils

R4. Ensure that pupils arrive to lessons on time

R5. Apply to the Welsh Government for a material change to the registration of the school

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous note of visit or inspection report

Recommendation 1: Ensure that teachers use information on pupils' ability and progress when planning lessons to meet pupils' learning needs

The new SLT is in the early stages of developing improved processes for quality assuring the work of the school. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements on teachers' planning.

Recommendation 2: Further strengthen the provision for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum, including in vocational, enrichment and outdoor activities

The new SLT is in the early stages of developing improved processes for quality assuring the work of the school. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

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

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

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:

- **Apply to the Welsh Government for a material change**

Standard 6: The provision of information

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 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 registration

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

The school does not currently meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school should address the issues identified above for each standard.

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 (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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