



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

A report on

Greenhill Special School

**Heol Brynglas
Rhiwbina
Cardiff
CF14 6UJ**

Date of inspection: April 2023

by

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

About Greenhill Special School

Name of provider	Greenhill Special School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Special
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	64
Pupils of statutory school age	58
Number in nursery classes	0
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Maintained Special is 46.2%)	75.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Maintained Special is 99.8%)	100.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2013
Start date of inspection	24/04/2023
<p>Greenhill is a special school, maintained by Cardiff City Council, that provides day education for 64 pupils aged 11 to 18 years. All pupils have statements of special educational needs in relation to their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.</p> <p>Many pupils have specific learning difficulties that may include dyslexia, dyspraxia ASD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A few pupils also have medical needs.</p> <p>Almost all pupils live in Cardiff, and a very few come from neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>Currently all the pupils on roll are boys. About one fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority.</p> <p>The headteacher took up post in January 2020. The leadership team includes the headteacher, deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher.</p>	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Greenhill School is a caring and nurturing school, which provides sensitive support for pupils' emotional well-being. As a result, most pupils and their families build positive and trusting relationships with the staff team. The school offers a range of beneficial and supportive interventions that support pupils' additional learning needs well. In addition, it works well with a wide range of specialist services, including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. This supportive atmosphere contributes well to pupils' positive levels of well-being, their personal development and the standards that they achieve from their individual starting points.

In lessons and over time, many pupils make appropriate progress from their initial starting points and against targets in their personal plans. In relation to their needs, they make sound progress in a range of areas that support their learning and personal development at school and in preparation for their future lives. The school provides a broad range of learning activities with a strong emphasis on outdoor learning. The curriculum is well linked to the interests and aptitudes of the pupils. However, attendance issues impact on the rate of progress of a minority of pupils across the school.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school and work well with staff to foster an inclusive ethos where pupils feel safe and valued. The headteacher and staff establish positive working relationships with families and ensure that communication is consistent and effective. As a result, the school supports pupils effectively beyond the school day and at times of critical need. In addition, leaders take appropriate account of national priorities such as the school's work to mitigate the impact of poverty on pupil achievement. For example, leaders make certain that finance does not become a barrier to learning through initiatives such as school funded trips. This has enabled pupils to experience things outside of their normal everyday life such as going on a flight to Edinburgh. As a result, pupils are engaged and motivated to learn.

The school uses an appropriate range of monitoring activities such as learning walks and book scrutiny. However, systems to evaluate the school's provision and plan for improvement are not robust or precise enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Respond to the issues raised in the well-being letter
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning, ensuring that they focus specifically on identifying the most important areas of whole-school improvement
- R3 Improve attendance

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing a whole school approach to securing equity, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

In lessons and over time, many pupils make appropriate progress from their initial starting points and against targets in their personal plans. In relation to their needs, they make sound progress in a range of areas that support their learning and personal development. These skills help pupils to make suitable progress during their time at the school and in their future lives. However, attendance issues impact on the rate of progress of a minority of pupils across the school.

In many lessons, pupils develop their social skills successfully. They work well alongside their peers; they celebrate each other's successes and mostly enjoy each other's company. For example, in a lesson to understand information and communication technology (ICT) processes, pupils work together successfully and enjoy following each other's instructions carefully to make milkshakes.

Where necessary, pupils manage their own behaviour effectively. This is due to skilful support from teaching staff. Many listen and respect the views of other pupils and staff and develop valuable communication skills. They demonstrate appropriate skills such as good eye contact and use of nonverbal communication. A minority of pupils confidently present their new knowledge and understanding to their peers. For example, they share information about their local area and cynefin or arctic animals. In addition, they respond politely in conversation with visitors at the school.

In lessons, many pupils develop their reading suitably and in line with their ability. They skim and scan texts and can locate information effectively. For example, they demonstrate appropriate comprehension skills in response to their reading of recent news articles. A few pupils read aloud with high levels of fluency and expression. These pupils can decode words, and they are able to self-correct when reading unfamiliar words such as "debut". Pupils develop an enjoyment of reading by listening to the class teacher read books such as *War Dog* by Henry Treece and *Crossing the Line* by Tia Fisher.

Overall, pupils' writing skills are less developed across the school. Many pupils can write in sentences and a minority write in paragraphs. When given the opportunity, more able pupils develop their independent writing skills progressively and develop their understanding. They write for a variety of different purposes. For example, they write persuasive letters to the headteacher making suggestions for improvements at the school.

Many pupils develop their numeracy skills suitably within a range of meaningful contexts. They use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with increasing confidence and can explain their methods and their reasoning. For example, pupils use measuring skills accurately when weighing ingredients in food technology or when measuring wood to build planters. More able pupils analyse world population data and explore any correlation with climate change. Older pupils learn valuable numeracy skills such as calculating distance or using bearings as part of their outdoor expeditions.

Many pupils practise ICT skills across the curriculum where appropriate. For example, they use electronic tablets and laptops confidently to email their teachers,

to compose short pieces of music and to join in an online quiz. However, across the Key Stages, there are limited opportunities for pupils to consistently develop their ICT skills progressively over time.

Overall, pupils across the school make limited progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Many pupils benefit from a range of beneficial and rewarding physical and outdoor activities such as climbing and using the school gym. As a result, pupils improve their fitness and well-being over time.

Most pupils develop their creative skills successfully. For example, they experiment with colours and textures when producing attractive acrylic paintings or choosing colours in the hairdressing and barbering sessions. Pupils enjoy the drumming sessions and keep to rhythms effectively.

Pupils develop their independent living skills suitably. For example, they prepare healthy meals on a budget or develop an understanding of personal hygiene. Older pupils develop an understanding of budgeting as a young adult. Nearly all pupils in the sixth form develop their independent living skills well during their work experience opportunities.

Nearly all pupils achieve an appropriate range of accreditation in core subjects in addition to areas that reflect their abilities and interests well. This includes accreditation at a range of levels and in subjects such as barista training, construction and climbing.

Over the last three academic years, most pupils leaving the school progressed into education, training or employment.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Over their time at Greenhill School, most pupils build positive relationships with the staff team. They trust staff to deal with any problems or worries they may have and know who to go to if they are concerned. These positive relationships with staff support pupils well and consequently, most pupils feel safe in school. In lessons, many pupils settle appropriately to work and listen well to instructions. They persevere with their task with skilful encouragement from staff.

Most pupils demonstrate good behaviour in class, around the school and during lunchtimes in the hall. Many work well with their peers in small groups when playing games and engaging in learning activities. The mutual support and encouragement they provide to each other in settings such as the climbing wall is a particular strength.

The majority of pupils attend the school regularly and around half of these pupils improve their attendance over their time at the school. For these pupils, this represents significant progress. However, a minority of pupils do not attend regularly enough, which has an impact on their learning. In addition, a few pupils who struggle to attend school regularly are on part-time bespoke timetables and only attend lessons for short periods during the week. Whilst most of the younger pupils who commenced the year on a part time timetable have progressed to attend full time, a few pupils do not make swift enough progress in increasing their time at the school.

The majority of pupils enjoy taking part in the valuable activities on offer to them such as bushcraft, caving, white water rafting and paddleboarding. These activities positively support them to develop their physical and mental well-being, confidence and self-esteem.

Around half of the pupils enjoy the beneficial residential experiences provided by the school each year. For example, they work in small groups as part of a night time navigation activity at Bannau Brycheiniog. They increase their confidence and resilience and work well as a team within their peer groups.

In addition, many older pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme at bronze and silver level. They demonstrate valuable independent skills as they plan their expedition routes, design their menus according to a budget and cook their own meals.

Pupils in the school council explain their role clearly and are proud of the work they do within the school. For example, they requested the reintroduction of crockery plates rather than paper plates in the school canteen. In addition, the council have asked for certain foods to be added to the menu such as salad bowls and fajitas. This has a positive impact on their healthy eating choices at lunchtime.

Pupils develop appropriately their understanding of the importance of helping others through their participation in a variety of activities. For example, they raise money for charity and take part in regular litter picking activities in the local area.

Over recent years, the number of fixed term exclusions has reduced and the number of permanent exclusions remains low.

Teaching and learning experiences

Greenhill School provides a broad range of learning experiences with a strong emphasis on outdoor learning. The curriculum provides extensive opportunities for personal, social and emotional development, with a range of providers, both inside and outside the classroom. The curriculum is well linked to the interests and aptitudes of the pupils. They have a significant element of choice daily across practical and engaging sessions such as woodworking, cookery and bush crafts. The school uses the outside space very effectively to create learning opportunities, including gardening and grounds maintenance for pupils in the sixth form.

The curriculum provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn and enjoy the natural environment of South Wales, via the school's COED (Creative Outdoor Education Development) programme. In addition, the school makes good use of external partners to facilitate a broad range of activities for all pupils such as paddle boarding, indoor climbing and canoeing. The curriculum has a strong focus on the development of well-being and emotional health. Pupils build on previous learning and develop their skills in a range of contexts. For example, they are motivated to learn and develop important life skills through their outdoor bushcraft activities.

The implementation of the Curriculum for Wales is at an early stage of development. Currently, teachers adopt a variety of planning tools and largely base learning around central topics and areas of interest to the pupils.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital competence. Teaching staff support pupils to develop

their reading skills suitably and they provide appropriate scaffolds and models to begin to encourage pupils to write.

The school provides pupils with a range of experiences and training opportunities related to the world of work. For example, pupils develop interpersonal skills through opportunities to train as a barista. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to gain a variety of qualifications such as industry specific qualifications. These opportunities benefit pupils in developing ambitions, personal confidence and gaining employment.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their social and emotional skills. An appropriate personal and social education programme is well supported by contributions from external partners. For example, the police liaison officer and school health nurse provide meaningful, beneficial information, advice and guidance on the impact of choices and the consequences related to these. In addition, tabletop games and sports activities provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to further develop their social skills such as turn taking and collaboration.

The school provides suitable opportunities to develop basic spoken Welsh through daily greetings, the school prayer and use of simple phrases. Staff make purposeful use of Welsh heritage sites such as the national museum site at St Fagan's and local beaches to promote pupils' awareness of Welsh heritage and culture. The school ensures that the cost of these trips and activities is not a barrier to learning.

Staff use their knowledge of pupil likes and dislikes well to support their needs during the day. Staff show kindness, understanding and respect to pupils' responses and behaviour. Across the school, including at the Ely base, strong relationships are evident between staff and pupils and nearly all staff are successful in supporting pupils to both regulate and access learning. Teachers deploy support staff effectively within classes to support individual pupil needs and to provide appropriate intervention.

Overall, teachers and teaching assistants ask a range of valuable questions and provide appropriate verbal feedback to pupils. Where practice is strong, staff listen carefully to student feedback and modify their teaching appropriately, enabling pupils to improve the quality of their work. However, written feedback does not always identify the next steps of learning clearly enough.

The school keeps parents and carers well informed with useful information regarding their children's progress on a regular basis using a variety of appropriate methods.

Care, support and guidance

Greenhill School is a very caring and nurturing school with pupil well-being at the heart of all of its work. There is a strong culture of respect between staff and pupils and staff are sensitive to their needs. This caring atmosphere contributes well to pupils' positive levels of well-being, their personal development and the standards that they achieve from their individual starting points.

The school offers a range of beneficial and supportive interventions. For example, the nurture group and specific support for pupils with learning difficulties provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to improve their social, emotional and literacy skills. The school also works well with a wide range of specialist services, including

educational psychologists, the school psychotherapist and speech and language therapists, to provide valuable support for pupils.

Procedures to track and monitor pupil progress in achieving their individual education plan (IEP) targets are in the early stage of development. Whilst the school has a clear understanding of individual pupil needs, there are not currently clear whole school processes in place to track and monitor pupils' overall progress and well-being, including attendance, as they move through the school. Monitoring of engagement in lessons and improvements in behaviour are underdeveloped.

The school prepares pupils well in their transition to adult life. It provides beneficial information and guidance regarding options available to pupils in their next steps. For example, the school invites partners to talk about their careers such as working in the automotive industry. In addition, older pupils have the opportunity to take part in valuable vocational experiences such as a virtual reality construction site. Close links with local colleges and other agencies enrich the provision in this area. The school ensures a range of experiences that helps pupils to make informed decisions about their future and supports them well in accessing further learning and work-related experiences.

The positive links with the local community provide older pupils with valuable work experience placements. These partnerships allow pupils to develop skills and attributes in a range of real-life contexts such as working in cafes, skate parks and park services.

The school has well-established links with an appropriate range of external agencies. These include the local community police and the well-being nurse as well as third sector organisations and the youth justice team. This multi-agency work supports a joined-up approach to supporting pupils and their families well, for example by supporting pupils effectively in learning about the more sensitive aspects of their relationships and sex education, such as puberty in both males and females, testicular health and sexting.

The school encourages pupils to engage with the creative arts through their work in school and as part of a range of educational visits. For example, the whole school recently visited the Millennium Centre to watch Bugsy Malone.

The school promotes healthy eating well throughout the curriculum. Many pupils develop valuable skills and understanding of healthy lifestyle choices through cookery classes. In addition, pupils are given opportunity to identify and choose healthy food choices, for example when compiling meal plans and budgeting for residential trips.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy, for example barbering skills, drum lessons, basketball and Balchder, the LGBTQ+ club. Nearly all pupils have the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities such as mountain biking, white water rafting and hill-walking. These opportunities positively support pupils to develop their social skills such as sharing, waiting their turn and considering the views of others. In addition, a majority of pupils each year benefit from valuable opportunities to take part in residential trips, for example to canoe camp on the river Wye and Eryri. These opportunities help pupils to develop confidence, self-esteem and teamwork.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in worthwhile decision-making activities as part of the school council. For example, pupils are invited to join interview panels to appoint members of staff and contribute purposefully to decisions that affect their life in the school.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are safe. It provides staff and pupils with relevant, appropriate information on how to keep themselves safe in all situations across the curriculum. The school's arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are sound. All staff are aware of the safeguarding arrangements within the school. Issues were raised with the school relating to the recording of information at the time of the inspection, resulting in a well-being letter being issued to the school and local authority.

Leadership and management

The headteacher works effectively with staff and governors to promote an appropriate vision for Greenhill School, as a caring supportive community that enables its pupils to be the best that they can be. Leaders at all levels aim for all pupils to leave school with self-value and self-worth, feeling that they can contribute to society and knowing how to keep themselves safe and well.

Leaders promote well-being highly effectively across the school community. They ensure that all staff have a secure understanding of the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences and foster positive relationships across the school. Leaders and staff act as strong role models for pupils. As a result, pupils show high levels of respect to each other, visitors and staff at the school. This is a notable strength.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. They have a sound understanding of national priorities such as additional learning needs (ALN) and curriculum reform. Governors work with leaders to check that suitable policies and procedures are in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. However, their role in reviewing record keeping and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes is underdeveloped.

Leaders take appropriate account of national priorities such as the school's work to mitigate the impact of poverty on pupil achievement. For example, leaders make certain that finance does not become a barrier to learning through initiatives such as school funded trips. This has enabled pupils to broaden their horizons such as going on a flight to Edinburgh to experience life in a different city. As a result, pupils are engaged and motivated to learn.

The headteacher works effectively with the governing body to manage school finances and resources. They ensure that the school provides a wide range of experiences that help to enrich pupils' learning. For example, when the school gives pupils opportunities to cook, to explore vocational skills such as hairdressing, and to experience and learn through the outdoors, pupils begin to develop aspirations for the future. Leaders deploy staff effectively to make best use of their expertise and experience.

The headteacher and senior leaders work well with a range of strategic partners to further enhance provision and learning opportunities for pupils. For example, as a

result of partnership working, a few pupils appropriately benefit from the school's alternative education provision in Ely.

The headteacher and staff establish positive working relationships with families and ensure that communication is consistent and effective. As a result, the school supports pupils effectively beyond the school day and at times of critical need. For example, the school signposts families in need of support to a school family therapist who works therapeutically with pupils and their parents or carers. In addition, the school holds half termly coffee mornings for parents and prospective parents to visit the school. Staff recognise and value the strength of the relationship with parents and carers and support them exceptionally well. Through these processes, leaders engage families in pupil learning and promote well-being and a positive culture of safeguarding. Whilst plans for use of the pupil development grant are suitable, planning is not sufficiently focused to enable leaders to monitor the impact of their actions.

The school uses a range of worthwhile monitoring activities such as learning walks, and book scrutiny. As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school. Recently, leaders have begun to employ a new self-evaluation system to gather information about the standards of teaching and learning. This work is at an early stage of development and the system is not yet robust enough to strategically inform areas for improvement. School improvement plans link appropriately to national priorities with clear rationale and success criteria. However, actions do not always have appropriate timescales and do not always sufficiently link to whole-school self-evaluation activities.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have clarity on individual pupil progress. They understand the needs of every child well and work effectively with outside agencies to provide relevant support. However, leaders do not currently have a clear enough view about pupil progress across the school and over time to inform school improvement.

Leaders provide staff and governors with useful professional learning opportunities. Training is linked appropriately to school improvement priorities as well as personal professional development targets through the school's performance management processes.

Staff are encouraged to develop their professional skills effectively. This provision incorporates an offer of training opportunities which range from national leadership programmes to visiting and observing practice in local schools. This is further enhanced by opportunities to share practice at weekly staff training sessions. In addition, leaders provide opportunities for staff to collaborate with partner teachers such as the recent work by a few staff to trial curriculum approaches at Key Stage 3.

The school is proactive in sharing its own expertise with other schools across the region. For example, when members of the team presented at a conference, they shared the school's positive work on being aware of the impact of trauma. In addition, members of the school have worked alongside a local college to share expertise in meeting the needs of the pupils as they transition to their next stage in education.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body 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, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read 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 a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- 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 has 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, 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

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 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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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