



# Report summary for parents and carers on Heronsbridge School

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

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

# Overview

Pupils at Heronsbridge School are happy, safe and enjoy coming to school. They are kind to each other and courteous and respectful to staff and visitors. This stems from the highly effective values, which are well-established at the school. 'Together we can' is embedded in all that happens at the school and celebrated by pupils, staff, parents and all stakeholders.

Nearly all pupils make extremely strong progress in their learning during their time at the school. They develop effective communication systems, which pupils use purposefully during the school day. Many pupils develop writing and reading skills appropriate to their needs. Most pupils develop numeracy skills that are relevant to their needs. In all aspects of learning and over time, many pupils develop valuable independence skills.

A strong feature of the school is the decidedly positive behaviour of pupils and their highly effective attitudes to learning. Together with strong working relationships with staff, pupils fully engage in all aspects of the school community. Pupil voice is another strong feature of the school. Allowing pupils to influence what and how they learn is well-established at the school. Staff proactively provide relevant opportunities for all pupils to influence their day-to-day experiences at the school extremely effectively.

The broad, stimulating pupil-centred curriculum is robustly planned and involves the whole staff team, pupils and parents. As a result, as pupils move through the school, their experiences broaden, are purposeful and where appropriate they gain valuable accreditation. Staff have high expectations for all pupils including developing lifelong independence skills. These prepare pupils well for the next stages in their lives. As a result, pupils transition to a range of post-school destinations, including college, successfully.

Leadership and management of the school is outstanding. Highly effective processes are in place that support improvement planning across the school strongly. Staff are highly motivated and manage the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Staff access a robust and valuable professional learning programme. As a result, they are highly skilled and strive to continually improve their practice to better support the needs of pupils at the school.

# Recommendations

No recommendations

## What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to the curriculum and professional learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## School context

Name of provider	Héronsbridge School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Special
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	236
Pupils of statutory school age	182
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%)	39.2%
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	3.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/06/2014

Start date of inspection	02/10/2023
<p>Héronsbridge is a residential special school maintained by Bridgend local authority. The school provides education for pupils aged three to 19 years. Nearly all pupils attend on a day basis.</p> <p>The school population has grown over many years from 219 in 2014 to 266 currently on the roll of the school. During the same timeframe, the profile of pupils attending the school has changed. There has been a marked increase in pupils with a primary diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and complex needs who attend the centre for autism at the school.</p> <p>Many pupils have either a statement of special needs or a local authority individual development plan (IDP). A minority of pupils are at school action plus. Pupils at the school have a range of needs, including profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school is organised into departments, primary, secondary, post-16, and a centre for pupils across the age range that have a primary diagnosis of autism and complex needs.</p> <p>Most pupils live in Bridgend local authority, and a few are placed at Heronsbridge by neighbouring authorities. A very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Very few pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. Forty-one percent of pupils receive free school meals. This is slightly lower than the all-Wales average of 46% for special schools. Attendance rates are around 91% which is above the all-Wales average of 88%.</p> <p>Since September 2023, the post-16 department (four classes) has relocated to Bridgend College. This is in response to increasing pupil numbers at the school. The school is due to have a new build in 2026.</p>	

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