



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

A report on

Options Kinsale School

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Options Kinsale School

Options Kinsale School is an independent school that offers education for up to 30 pupils aged between 8 and 19 years who have complex needs and a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC). The school opened in 2007 and is owned by Options Autism (4) Ltd and is a fully owned subsidiary of P. Bloom Ltd, which is part of Outcomes First Group, a provider of children's services in the UK.

The school currently has 22 pupils on roll, placed by local authorities from both Wales and England. All pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) or equivalent. Many pupils are care experienced children and many reside in the company's children's homes. Most pupils are from English-speaking backgrounds.

The headteacher has been in post since 1 January 2024. The deputy headteacher has been in post since August 2023. The education team consists of five class teachers, one of whom is the additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCo). There are also two part-time teachers who provide non-contact time. There are two higher level teaching assistants/ instructors, thirty-three full-time teaching assistants five part-time teaching assistants.

The last core inspection was in September 2018. Inspectors last visited the school for a monitoring visit in January 2023. At this inspection, the school fully met the independent school standards.

Main findings

Strengths

Options Kinsale School offers pupils a calm and nurturing environment. There are suitable working relationships between staff and pupils and staff know pupils' interests and additional learning needs (ALN) well. This positively supports pupil well-being.

The school has begun to strengthen the curriculum to provide more valuable and meaningful learning experiences. For example, pupils have good opportunities to follow their interests and explore and experiment through their play.

Staff use incidental Welsh appropriately in relation to pupil need and ability. Pupils are consistently prompted to offer greetings and other phrases as part of a wider communication approach.

Areas for development

Quality assurance procedures and strategic development planning, including the school vision, are at a very early stage of development and have not yet directly impacted on the provision, progress and outcomes for pupils.

Teachers are in the process of developing the new curriculum. However, planning and assessment for skills across this curriculum are in the early stages of development. In addition, planning to ensure that activities for pupils are appropriately challenging or aspirational is underdeveloped.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Strengthen the procedures for quality assurance and ensure that they focus appropriately on evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make
- R2 Continue to develop the curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of all pupils

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Embed quality assurance processes to continue to support effective strategic planning and improvement.

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2023, there has been a period of instability in leadership at the school. Following the resignation of the substantive headteacher and subsequent acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher took the post of acting headteacher during the autumn term 2023. A new headteacher was appointed, from January 2024.

These new leaders are developing the vision for the school, but this has not yet been shared wider with all stakeholders. Senior leaders have begun to evaluate the work of the school and accurately identify a few priorities for improvement. However, quality assurance procedures and strategic development planning are at a very early stage of development. They have not yet directly impacted on the provision, progress and outcomes for pupils. As a result, the school has made limited progress in meeting this recommendation.

R2. Ensure the consistent use of signing across the school.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has made beneficial progress towards this recommendation. The clinical team have worked alongside the education team to increase the level and consistency of signing across the school. This has involved the creating of a signing action plan, weekly training sessions and a staff 'class champion' to lead on the signs of the week within each class group. As a result, across the school, many pupils are now able to access the communication methods of their choice to help to support their learning.

R3. Strengthen the opportunities for staff to learn from the identified good practice of others both internally and externally.

Leaders are in the early stages of providing opportunities for staff to share good practice. For example, the deputy headteacher has modelled 'play and talk' across the school through meetings and mentoring. In addition, there are beneficial opportunities for staff to participate in professional learning offered by the wider organisation. Leaders have appropriately recognised the need to strengthen professional learning across the school, both internally and externally. However, this is at an early stage of development. In addition, the impact of professional learning on developing teaching and learning has not been fully evaluated.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 1.

Standard 2: The spiritual, moral, and cultural development of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 2.

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

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 5.

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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 7.

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 2003.

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 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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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