



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

A report on

Aran Hall School

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Aran Hall School

Aran Hall is an independent special school situated close to Dolgellau in Gwynedd. The school is one of six specialist schools operated across England and Wales by the SENAD group. The school provides education, care and therapy for pupils aged 11 to 19 years who have a range of learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and associated challenging behaviours.

The school currently has eleven pupils on roll, all of whom are boys who live in the children's home that shares the school's site. Nearly all pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and are looked after by local authorities in England. A very few pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) and are looked after by Welsh local authorities. Nearly all of the pupils are from English-speaking backgrounds.

Main findings

Strengths

Since the last visit, leaders have made strong progress in improving practice at the school. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development and a clear vision for the strategic development of the school.

The school builds pupils' emotional resilience and independence well through its 'Achieve! Programme'. Pupils are enthusiastically engaged with the programme and are motivated by its stepped approach to acknowledgement and reward of positive behaviours.

School staff work closely with their colleagues in the linked residential home to ensure that the needs of pupils are met well. Partnership working and communication between staff is a strength of the school.

The school supports pupils to access a suitable range of activities, qualifications and accreditations, which align well to their needs, abilities, interests and future pathways. For example, pupils sit maths and English qualifications at different levels ranging from entry level, functional skills and GCSE. Further, pupils have recently designed and built a chicken coup for eight rescue chickens, which now live on the school grounds.

The proprietor pays appropriate regard to the registration and operational guidance for independent schools in Wales.

The school meets the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 evaluated during this visit.

Areas for development

Since March 2023, the school has made important improvements in its assessment processes enabling them to understand pupil progress. However, the school is in the early stages of implementation of these processes and therefore it is too early to comment on their impact.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Continue to evaluate assessment arrangements at a whole school level to improve staff understanding of pupil progress in skills across the curriculum

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Ensure that school improvement processes focus clearly on the identified areas for development

The school has made strong progress against this recommendation.

Leaders have refined the school improvement plan, which now clearly focuses on four specific areas for development. The school improvement plan is communicated to all staff well.

Leaders are clear on the strategic direction of the school and its strengths and areas for development.

R2. Refine assessment arrangements at a whole school level to ensure a clear understanding of pupil progress in skills across the curriculum

Since the visit, the school has made considerable progress in redesigning its assessment and tracking system. There is an effective whole-school curriculum map, which is supported by and congruent with the school's curriculum policy. This policy is scaffolded by Curriculum for Wales, makes provision for learning experiences in all six areas of learning and experiences (AoLEs), and details potential accreditations and qualifications.

An individual curriculum map is drawn up for every pupil, detailing their programmes of study and associated accreditations in each AoLE. These plans support bespoke planning, provision and assessment highly effectively. For example, this individualised approach has informed strategic selection of appropriate qualifications and accreditations.

Drawing on the individualised curriculum maps and EHCPs / individual development plans (IDPs), the school has drawn up individual education plans (IEPs) for every pupil. These act as termly review documents, setting targets and achievement criteria in each AoLE, and recording progress made.

The IEP reviews for individual pupils are collated by leaders into a central tracking document, which provides an effective record of attainment and progress over time. However, although these systems are designed effectively to provide an overview of progress made in the development of pupil skills, their implementation is in its early stages and it is too early to evaluate the use of available information to drive improvement and progress.

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 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 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.

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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This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).