



Annual monitoring inspection report on:

Bettws Lifehouse

Date of inspection: May 2014

by

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

Estyn's annual monitoring visits to independent and independent special schools in Wales are required to report on whether the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) registration standards regulations for independent schools are met and, where they are not met, what they need to do in order to comply.

Further information regarding the regulations governing this monitoring visit can be found in the following documentation:

- Welsh Assembly Government: *Independent Schools Information and Registration Handbook*, April 2004; and
- Welsh Office Circular 37/94: *Independent schools which admit pupils with special educational needs*:
 - paragraphs 1-8: granting/removing approval;
 - paragraph 42: changes in character, management or control of the school; and
 - 37/94 paragraph 43: significant differences from approved number.

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Context

Bettws Lifehouse is an independent special school situated in a small, rural village in mid-Wales. The school opened in 2007 and has approval from the Welsh Government to admit up to 15 boys and girls from age 9 to 19 years. It provides day-school education for pupils with challenging social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who are placed by authorities in Wales and England.

At the time of this inspection, all pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a very few pupils are looked after by their placing authority. All pupils have missed part of their education in mainstream settings and have had poor records of attendance.

Bettws Lifehouse creates an individual learning pathway for each pupil that reflects their individual, educational and personal needs. In 2013, all five leavers attained accredited qualifications. Four of these pupils moved on to college and maintained the placements for a full academic year.

The school aims to provide a 'nurturing environment which supports young people to go forward into their lives, in the wider world, with confidence. In this environment pupils will be able to achieve realistic goals and leave with skills that are transferable to both work and home'.

Main findings

Strengths

The school's strengths are that:

- it is well led and well managed. Leaders and managers have responded appropriately to the recommendations of the last annual monitoring inspection;
- overall, pupils engage well in lessons and remain on task. All pupils know their timetables and move between sessions quietly with varying levels of staff support according to need;
- each pupil has a useful work diary that contains their timetable, individual education plan and current targets. Staff record pupils' academic performance and behaviour for each lesson in the diary and collate the information effectively to provide an overall chart of each pupil's performance for the week. These records give pupils a clear picture of their own progress;
- nearly all pupils make good progress during their time at the school. The school assesses and monitors their progress well. Data from standardised testing shows that most pupils make significant improvement in developing their reading, spelling and mathematics skills;
- nearly all pupils have a history of poor attendance in their previous placements but their attendance at Bettws Lifehouse improves over time and is generally good. Pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly;
- the curriculum is planned well to meet pupils' learning needs. It includes practical activities such as cooking, gardening, horse-riding and stable management that engage pupils well;
- all leavers in 2013 attained accredited qualifications. The school offers appropriate opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications in accredited courses, for example GCSE, Entry level, BTEC and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and in a range of vocational subjects;
- the school provides a caring and supportive learning environment where staff and pupils have good working relationships. Staff cater very well for individual pupils' needs. They use praise and encouragement effectively to keep pupils motivated and build pupils' self-esteem;
- there are appropriate resources to support the curriculum that include a wide range of good quality fiction and non-fiction books;
- the school makes good use of facilities in the local community. These include a local woodland area, cycle maintenance business and a farm for equine studies. There are useful links with the local college where older pupils may attend part-time courses. Pupils have good opportunities to gain work experience, for example at the farm, a nursery and a department store; and
- there are good links with the careers services in Wales and England to support pupils moving on.

Areas for development

The school's areas for development are that:

- planning for key skills in English and mathematics is thorough but teachers' planning for key skills in other subjects across the curriculum is less consistent;
- pupils' arrival times vary because of transport arrangements. For the first session, they complete practice worksheets in English and mathematics until everyone has arrived. However, while this time is used purposefully, the work is not always marked so that opportunities to identify teaching points are missed;
- the school maintains clear, detailed records of serious incidents and the use of physical intervention. However, there is sometimes a delay in recording the detail in the bound book. The records do not usually include a witness signature, or accounts of the event by the pupil or a witness; and
- the school is registered for pupils with behavioural difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. There are currently pupils on roll with autistic spectrum disorder, including Asperger Syndrome.

Recommendations

- R1 Make sure that pupils' early morning work is marked and followed up to ensure that they know what they need to do to improve
- R2 Strengthen the recording of serious incidents
- R3 Apply to the Welsh Government to extend the school's registration approval under S347, to include pupils with autistic spectrum disorder

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

Recommendation 1: Continue to ensure that self-evaluation processes are thorough and impact on planning for school development

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

The self-evaluation report is a thorough, evaluative document. It identifies strengths and highlights areas for improvement. The process is rigorous and draws on first-hand evidence from lesson observations. These are then prioritised in the school development plan (SDP). The SDP sets clear targets and identifies strategies to secure the improvement within appropriate timescales. The plan indicates success criteria and staff to lead on each area for development.

Recommendation 2: Continue to ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to gain qualifications in accredited courses, appropriate to their learning needs

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Pupils have good opportunities to gain qualifications in a wide range of academic and vocational accredited courses in accordance with their ability. In 2013, these included GCSE and/or Entry level courses in English, mathematics, science, art and design, religious studies, history and Spanish. The school also enabled pupils to gain accredited qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT), sport, key skills, equine studies, first aid, food hygiene and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that pupils are fully engaged in reviewing their IEPs formally on a more regular basis and that reviews are recorded effectively

This recommendation has been fully addressed.

Copies of individual education plans (IEPs) and their current targets are included in pupils' individual diaries. These are working documents that pupils refer to throughout the day. Pupils are fully involved in reviewing their own progress on a daily, weekly and long term basis. Pupils use the diaries throughout the day to review their timetables, targets and staff comments. They are very effective tools.

Recommendation 4: Consider tightening the structure of the end-of-day meeting and giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on their daily progress

This recommendation is no longer relevant.

The school has changed its daily practice and no longer holds an end-of-day meeting that involves all the pupils in a plenary session. Instead, each pupil discusses the day individually with a learning mentor and has an appropriate opportunity to reflect on their progress. Therefore, this recommendation is no longer relevant.

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, social 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

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 5.

Standard 6: The provision of information

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 6.

Standard 7: The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 7.

Recommendation regarding registration

When considering this school's registration the National Assembly for Wales 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 annual monitoring inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

School information

School	Bettws Lifehouse
School number	666/6048
Purpose of visit	Annual monitoring inspection
Date of visit	19 and 20 May 2014
Proprietor	Limited company with 3 directors
Staff	1 f/t teacher/proprietor with QTS and 8 p/t teachers with QTS; 1 f/t unqualified teacher/proprietor; and 10 p/t unqualified staff providing teaching and/or support in a range of subjects.
Number of pupils	14 boys and girls (including 1 post-16 student and 2 part-time pupils)
Provision	Day provision from 9.00 – 3.30 during Powys LA school term times.
Type of special educational need (SEN) catered for by the school	Approved under S347 Education Act 1996 for pupils with SEN for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and those with moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
Last Section 163 inspection	May 2012
Last annual monitoring inspection	May 2013
Last CSSIW inspection	N/A

Team information

Reporting Inspector	Rosemary Lait
Team Inspector	Anthony Mulcahy