



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

A report on

The Branas School

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About The Branas School

The Branas School provides specialised education and therapy for boys aged 11-18 who have complex social, emotional and behavioural needs and moderate learning difficulties. There are currently 19 pupils on roll at the school. Nearly all pupils are looked-after by local authorities in England and live in children's homes operated by Caretech. Most have an individual development plan (IDP) or education, health and care plan (ECHP). Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language.

The present acting headteacher has been in post since February 2024.

At the time of the core inspection in 2022 HMI found that the school did not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below for each standard:

The quality of education provided by the school

In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Develop a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively
- Ensure that the curriculum gives pupils of compulsory school age experience in the following areas of learning: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative
- Provide a programme of activities appropriate to the needs of pupils above statutory age
- Provide classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and use them effectively
- Introduce a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration

Following the core inspection, the school was asked to produce a post-inspection action plan. A team of HMI visited the school twice in 2023 to discuss their progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in March 2024 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previous areas of non-compliance.

Main findings

Strengths

Since the time of the core inspection in 2022, the school has made strong progress in responding to the areas of non-compliance. The school is now fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The education team have collaborated successfully to develop a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs and interests of pupils well. The school is continuing to diversify the current offer with option afternoons which include other subjects such as modern foreign languages, music and vocational qualifications. Their approach to curriculum planning is adaptive and reflective to meet the needs of pupils.

Leaders collect a range of important assessment information about each pupil on an ongoing basis. This includes baseline assessments when they join the school, progress against individual learning plans, and subject-level attainment. Staff use this information appropriately to review pupil progress at an individual and whole-school level. Further, teachers use this information successfully to provide pupils with a range of meaningful activities to develop important skills progressively over time.

Leaders have improved the maintenance and resources at school suitably since the time of the core inspection. As a result of new IT equipment, nearly all pupils use and develop their digital skills effectively across the curriculum.

Staff develop positive relationships with pupils. They use these relationships effectively to support positive engagement. At the time of this visit, nearly all pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders place a strong focus on transition and supporting learners to develop the skills needed to progress to positive future destinations. Leaders have strengthened links with local further education colleges, as well as the in-house clinical and residential team, to plan carefully for the transition of each pupil as they leave the school.

Leaders have a clear vision and values. They place pupils at the heart of decision making. They have collaborated successfully with the wider staff team and pupils to develop a new logo and mission statement: 'a community with learning is a community with heart'.

Areas for action

There have been several changes to the leadership at the school since the time of the core inspection. These include changes of headteacher as well as oversight provided by the wider organisation. As a result of this instability, processes to evaluate the work of the school are not yet fully established. Current leaders have recognised this as a priority for the school.

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, and cultural development of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 4: The suitability of proprietors and staff

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

Standard 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

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 6: The provision of information

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

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

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect this standard.

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

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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