



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

A report on

Amberleigh Therapeutic School, Golfa Hall

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Amberleigh Therapeutic School, Golfa Hall

Amberleigh Therapeutic School is an independent special school situated close to the market town of Welshpool, Powys. The school provides education, care and therapy for up to 20 pupils aged between 11 to 18 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school is administered by Amberleigh Care, a specialist children's services agency which has another independent special school in England.

The school currently has 15 pupils on roll, all of whom are boys. Around half of pupils have statements of special educational need or equivalent. All of the pupils are looked after by local authorities in Wales or England and live in the on-site children's home.

The headteacher has been in post since January 2021 and the deputy head teacher since February 2021. The previous role of director of education, who oversaw the work of the school no longer exists. Education is now overseen by the managing director, who has been in post since 2015.

Main findings

Strengths

Amberleigh Therapeutic School is a nurturing community. Pupils are well supported to develop their social skills and learn to manage relationships calmly and respectfully. For example, pupils take turns to cook lunch for the school and discuss issues and challenges in daily community meetings.

Staff are positive role models and develop highly effective working relationships with pupils. They provide sensitive guidance to support them to develop important skills, such as resilience. As a result, pupils engage purposefully with their learning.

Since the time of the last inspection, leaders have made beneficial changes to the school curriculum. New curriculum pathways support pupils to develop the skills needed for their future. For example, they benefit from links with industry, and undertake mock job interviews and work experience placements.

In addition to the core curriculum, the school provides an extensive range of engaging and authentic learning experiences. For example, pupils make preserves and craft wooden products to sell locally, repair bikes and grow their own food.

Pupils make sound progress from their individual starting points during their time at school and gain a range of relevant accreditation.

School leaders are committed and caring. They have introduced effective processes to ensure the smooth running of the school. Further, they have made a number of valuable changes since the time of the last inspection, for example, the addition of a new workshop and development of a garden area to enhance the learning environment.

Areas for development

The school has developed thorough quality assurance processes, which draw on a wide range of first-hand evidence successfully. However, improvement planning does not focus sharply enough on the few identified areas for development.

Recommendations

The school should:

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

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Ensure that lesson planning and activities meet the different ability needs of pupils

Since the time of the last inspection, there have been a number of beneficial changes to the curriculum, assessment processes and additional learning needs provision at the school. Upon entry to the school pupils are assessed and allocated to a relevant curriculum pathway. Where required, pupils benefit from regular one to one interventions to improve key skills, such as working memory. Further, pupils meet with key workers and teachers on a termly basis to reflect on their progress over the term.

As a result, staff have a sound understanding of the needs and abilities of pupils and plan well to meet these throughout the school day. In addition, where appropriate, pupils are also beginning to develop an understanding of their own needs and abilities.

R2. Improve the use of data for informing self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional learning

Since the time of the last inspection, there have been changes at all levels of leadership at the school. Leaders have made significant progress towards developing and implementing quality assurance arrangements to inform the school's self-evaluation work.

Leaders undertake a broad range of quality assurance work gathering useful evidence and data successfully. For example, there are regular captures of pupil progress data, termly learning walks, annual appraisals, and annual audits undertaken by school leaders alongside the proprietor.

Leaders use this information effectively to identify suitable improvement priorities and professional learning needs. However current plans contain a significant number of legacy improvements and do not focus sharply enough on the small number of current priorities the school has identified.

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 Standard 2.

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 3.

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 the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for 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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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