



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

**A report on**

**Headlands School**

**Date of inspection: February 2022**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Headlands School

Headlands School is an independent special school, situated in the residential area of Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is part of the Action for Children charity group.

The school provides residential and day placements for pupils aged 7 to 19 years with social, emotional and associated complex needs. All pupils have a wide range of additional learning needs including attachment disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity and autistic spectrum disorders and other various complex needs related to trauma and adversity. All pupils have either a statement of special educational need (SEN) or an Education health and care plan (EHCP). Around a quarter of pupils have looked-after child (LAC) status.

The school currently educates 69 pupils from Key Stage 2 to post-16. Currently there are 14 residential pupils who attend the school and the remaining 55 pupils are day pupils. Nearly all pupils come from Welsh local authorities, with a very few from English local authorities.

The school's aim is to develop young people wellbeing and independence through an individualised approach to both education and care.

The principal has been in post since 2009. The last full inspection by Estyn was in April 2019.

## Main findings

### Strengths

Nearly all pupils make strong progress from their starting points and gain a wide range of qualifications. During this monitoring visit, in lessons and around the school, most pupils displayed positive attitudes to their peers and staff and towards their learning. Overall, pupils engage well, display enthusiasm and pride in their learning and are eager to demonstrate their skills and the opportunities available to them.

Teachers have high expectations of pupil progress and communicate an enthusiasm for learning. School staff know the pupils very well and make highly effective use of this knowledge to tailor learning opportunities in order to interest pupils and ensure they make at least good progress. They plan learning activities that are matched well to pupils' individual needs and interests, which lead to high levels of pupil engagement in learning. This is a strength of the school.

Staff provide extremely positive role models for the pupils at Headlands School. Their approach helps pupils to demonstrate increased levels of confidence and, in many cases, to become resilient learners who are willing to broaden their learning and challenge themselves to improve.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has made important improvements to the curriculum. For example, it has strengthened the provision for work-related learning and has introduced an ambitious programme of outdoor education. This includes Spokes cycle repair shop, Café 100, and Bee Kind Zero Waste Shop, which are open to the public. These on-site opportunities provide pupils with high levels of challenge and valuable opportunities to develop a wide range of skills such as problem solving and thinking skills.

The school has a very effective personal and social education (PSE) and well-being curriculum. This covers important issues such as healthy relationships, personal safety and emotional well-being, and has a clear focus on helping pupils to become independent learners with high aspirations for their adult life. Senior leaders have strengthened the focus on well-being as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result have increased the PSE curriculum offer.

The senior leadership team provide highly effective strategic leadership for the school. Leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities well. Leaders communicate a clear vision, share a strong commitment to continuous school improvement and have high expectations of pupil attainment and behaviour. As a result, senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Staff across the school share a strong commitment to professional learning and benefit from valuable opportunities to identify and share good practice. This has helped the school to make important improvements, for example to strengthen the integrated therapeutic approach.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 inspected during this visit.

### **Areas for development**

The well-being curriculum is well established and has a strong focus on an attachment approach, which is well supported by the school therapeutic model. This is led by the pupil support team (PST), which comprises managers from the residential and school team. Therapeutic intervention plans are developing, which reflect the interventions appropriate to meet pupil needs. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these plans currently.

### **Recommendations**

#### **The school should:**

R1 Evaluate the impact of pupil therapeutic intervention plans

## **Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report**

### **Recommendation 1: Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching to ensure that all lessons match the best practice in the school**

Strong progress has been made towards meeting this recommendation across the school. The consistency and quality of teaching remain a priority for the school and are identified in the school improvement plan. The introduction of peer observations to share and improve practice as part of the scheduled lesson plan process is significantly supporting the continued consistency of high quality teaching at the school.

Since 2019 there has been a focus on increasing and improving teaching strategies across the school. This has been well supported by a programme of professional development for staff. For example, nearly all of the teachers have completed the 10-day outstanding teaching programme, which was shared with staff across the school. Inset days have designated arrangements in place, which allow staff to lead sessions and share valuable information from recent professional development activities. This is contributing well to improving standards in teaching at the school.

Teaching assistants (TAs) and Higher Level TAs (HLTAs) access an effective professional development programme to support gaining qualifications that develop their leadership and teaching skills, such as through the PCET qualification. Around half of the HLTAs undertake teaching qualifications and around half complete management and leadership training.

The integrated therapeutic approach is highly beneficial and results in staff skilled in recognising and responding to pupil emotional and behavioural needs who can adapt their teaching and planned learning experiences well when necessary. As a result, there has been an overall reduction in the levels of high level pupil behaviour at the school, and increased pupil engagement.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve pupil outcomes at the end of key stage 4**

Since the last inspection, Headlands School has successfully increased the curriculum offer for pupils, introducing a wider range of accredited vocational qualifications alongside strengthening the core curriculum offer. As a result, pupils access qualification routes that are relevant and effectively support their post school pathways. All pupils leaving Headlands School over the last three years have moved on to further education, specialist training or employment.

In lessons and over time, pupils make at least good progress in developing their knowledge and skills, and nearly all gain a useful range of appropriate qualifications by the time they leave. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and show interest, particularly in vocational activities. They are eager to achieve, concentrate and respond well to the support and challenge from the teaching staff.

The school has distributed leadership roles across all key stages and curriculum areas. This development has enhanced team working, strengthened the school's

leadership capacity, and is supporting the professional development of these staff. Middle level leaders contribute extremely well to strategic decision-making relating to the curriculum, to monitoring and evaluating provision, and to maintaining high standards in their areas. Planned outcomes and qualifications are mapped effectively to each area of learning for individual pupils, which ensures that progress can be effectively tracked.

The school has made strong progress in meeting this recommendation.

## **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 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 this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 4.

### **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 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 ([Estyn Site](#))

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:

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