



# Report summary for parents and carers on Tarren School

**Date of inspection: March 2024**

by Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

# Overview

Tarren School is a caring environment where all staff are committed to the school and their pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe at the school.

Nearly all parents and carers value the regular communication with the school. They believe that the staff at the school know their children well.

A new curriculum has recently been introduced to the school. This is at the early stages of being embedded. The curriculum offer is enriched with a range of beneficial activities outside of the classroom, for example through visits to Cardiff Castle and the local fire station, alongside weekly visits to the gym and local supermarket. However, in a few areas of the curriculum such as personal and social education (PSE), relationships and sex education (RSE) and careers, the provision is limited.

Teaching staff plan experiences that broadly build on pupils' interests. However, planning does not link well enough to the pupils' individual learning needs. As a result, many activities do not provide sufficient challenge.

Processes for tracking, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work in relation to the progress pupils are making are in the very early stages of development.

Improvement planning processes are significantly underdeveloped and do not clearly identify the key areas that the school needs to improve upon.

There are currently no opportunities for pupils to achieve external qualifications whilst at the school.

There are clear processes to help pupils understand the expectations of their behaviour. Staff record incidents of challenging behaviour, using the school's system appropriately. Assemblies to celebrate pupil achievements are held at the school and are valued by the pupils. However, strategies that enable pupils to reflect successfully on their behaviour and learn to manage and regulate their emotions are limited.

Since the school opened in 2019, there have been regular and significant changes to leadership and staffing at the school.

Leaders have failed to identify and address several safeguarding concerns at the school.

The school is not fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and the school has made limited progress against the recommendations left by inspectors during the last monitoring visit.

# Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the management of safeguarding and address the shortcomings identified during the inspection**
- R2 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024**
- R3 Ensure that the pupils' additional educational needs comply with the school's current registration category**
- R4 Establish effective procedures for quality assurance and improvement planning that focus clearly on pupil progress and the standards they achieve**
- R5 Establish ongoing and robust professional learning for staff to effectively meet pupils' additional learning needs**

## Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

### **The quality of education provided by the school**

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Draw up and implement effectively a written policy on the curriculum supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work [1(2)]
- Ensure the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those with a statement [1(2)(b)]
- Ensure where pupils have a statement, the education fulfils its requirements [1(2)(e)]
- Ensure that the school provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils [1(2)(g)]
- Ensure the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught [1(3)(a)]
- Ensure the teaching at the school encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves [1(3)(b)]
- Ensure teaching involves well planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of class time [1(3)(c)]
- Ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons [1(3)(d)]
- Ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessments to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress [1(3)(g)]

- Provide effective education for all pupils within a class to make progress, including pupils with statements and those for whom Welsh or English is an additional language [1(5)]

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with Welsh Government Guidance 283 / 2022 Keeping Learners Safe [3(2)(b)]
- Ensure the school has regard to any Welsh Government guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers of schools [3(4)]
- Ensure they have a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under Part II Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, as amended 1999, and by any report from the Fire Authority [3(5)]
- Ensure the school has a satisfactory written policy on First Aid and it implements this [3(6)]

### **The suitability of proprietors and staff**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools**

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure the school buildings provide reasonable resistance to penetration by rain, snow, wind and moisture from the ground [5(f)]
- Ensure there is sufficient access so that emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely for all pupils, including those with special needs [5(g)]
- Ensure that access to the school allows all pupils, including those with special needs, to enter and leave the school in safety and comfort [5(h)]
- Ensure that classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state [5(n)]
- Ensure that lighting, heating and ventilation in the classrooms and other parts of the school are satisfactory and in accordance with The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 [5(p)]
- Ensure there is appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely [5(t)]

### **The provision of information**

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that information is provided regarding the information on pupils with statements to the responsible local education authority as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the statement [6(8)]

### **The manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

## **What happens next**

**Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Government will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.**

**Estyn advises the proprietor to amend the current school development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the inspection recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.**

## School context

Name of provider	Tarren school
Proprietor	Val's Community
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	8
Pupils of statutory school age	8
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27/02/2023
Start date of inspection	11/03/2024
<p>Tarren School is an independent school for up to 20 pupils between the ages of 8 and 18 years who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC).</p> <p>The school has two sites, both of which are in semi-rural areas. One is situated in Neath Port Talbot and the other site is on the outskirts of Swansea.</p> <p>There are currently eight pupils at the school, five based on the Tarren School site and three on the Mill Haven site. There is a linked children's home on the site of Tarren School and many pupils live in this home. The school also takes day pupils. Many of the pupils at the school are in the care of their local authority and a minority are placed by local authorities in Wales. All pupils are in receipt of an individual development plan (IDP), statement of special educational need (SEN), or an education, health, and care plan (EHCP).</p> <p>The school is administered by Val's Community, a private limited company specialising in children's services that has another two independent schools in England.</p> <p>This is the school's first core inspection since registration. The school had a monitoring visit in February 2023. Since registration, there has been a change in leadership at all levels. The proprietor has been in position since August 2021. Having worked at the school as deputy head from 2021, the headteacher started his current position in July 2023.</p>	

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