



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

A report on

Brynmorgan Villa

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Brynmorgan Villa

Name of provider	Brynmorgan Villa
Proprietor	Springboard Education and Care
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	2
Pupils of statutory school age	2
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	20/05/2024
<p>Brynmorgan Villa is an independent special school for children and young people between the ages of 11 to 18 years. The school caters for pupils who have complex needs and learning difficulties consistent with social, emotional, and mental health difficulties.</p> <p>Pupils that attend the school are resident in the children's home that shares the school site. The school is situated in a semi-rural area in Neath Port Talbot. It is administered by Springboard Education and Care.</p> <p>There are currently two pupils at the school. These pupils are placed by local authorities in Wales.</p>	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Brynmorgan Villa is a nurturing and caring school. Leaders have successfully established a well-qualified and experienced team of education staff who collaborate well with each other. Staff develop effective working relationships with pupils and know how to support their emotional needs well.

The school is supported by an external therapeutic team. The therapeutic team provides training to all staff on how to understand and support pupils additional learning needs. In addition, pupils receive input from the therapists to aid them with managing their emotions.

The school's holistic approach to supporting the needs of pupils is a notable strength. As a result, over time pupils demonstrate improvements in their behaviour, engagement, and concentration.

The school has developed opportunities for tailored educational experiences for pupils through beneficial links with a local secondary school. The school provides a wide range of learning experiences for pupils including off-site activities, which enhance their learning. For example, pupils have the opportunity to attend rugby, cadets and fishing activities. However, the provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is underdeveloped, and the strategic planning of careers advice and preparing pupils for adulthood, is in the very early stages of development.

The proprietor holds the role as headteacher and head of education. They have an active role in the school and understand the strengths and areas of development clearly. The proprietor is supported in the day to day running of the school by the passionate unit lead and complex needs manager. However, the wide ranging and extensive responsibilities of these leaders limits their ability to keep up to date with national developments in education or to embed effective systems to track and monitor pupil progress.

The promotion of safeguarding is a high priority at the school. The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are safe. Leaders have strong links with the local authority safeguarding boards. However, a lack of formality in the implementation of the school's policies and procedures, weaken the provision at the school.

The school is not fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

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 2024. 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 meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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 almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 the school should:

- Ensure a written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils is drawn up and effectively implemented (6b)
- Ensure all staff, supply staff, volunteers and pupils receive appropriate training in the independent school's safeguarding policy in accordance with any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers in relation to safeguarding (10a)

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- R2 Review and clarify staff roles and responsibilities
- R3 Sharpen processes for recording and monitoring information across the school
- R4 Strengthen the curriculum provision for careers, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) and personal social education (PSE)

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Parliament 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 its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Learning

There is no report on pupils' learning. This is because the number of pupils present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual pupils.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

There is no report on pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning. This is because the number of pupils present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad range of learning experiences for pupils, which are well matched to the school's vision and values. The curriculum is driven appropriately by the individual learning needs of the pupils, their therapeutic needs, and their interests and aspirations.

A notable strength of the school is its holistic approach, featuring a more formal timetable and specialist staff for key subjects. As a result, over time pupils demonstrate improvements in their behaviour, engagement and concentration.

Staff build strong, trusting, empathetic relationships with pupils, creating a supportive learning environment. Staff know pupils extremely well including their additional learning needs (ALN), personal challenges and interests.

Additional activities such as the external science group and dog walking further enhance learning experiences. The school provides engaging and practical opportunities which support overall development well. In addition, sessions are planned effectively to develop pupils' resilience and enhance skills in listening, patience, and safety awareness.

The school's extra-curricular activities provide beneficial opportunities for physical skill development, leadership, and teamwork. For example, pupils have the opportunity to attend rugby, cadets and fishing activities after school and horse riding within the school day. These opportunities suitably enhance pupils' educational experiences.

The school has established beneficial links with a local secondary school, enhancing opportunities for tailored educational experiences. In addition, the school has recently increased the number of opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation for their learning. However, this is in the early stages of development.

The school provides activities for pupils designed to enhance their literacy, language, and communication skills, for example listening to stories such as 'Fed Up' to improve recall and comprehension. Numeracy is thoroughly embedded across the curriculum, particularly in practical lessons and individual projects such as horticulture. For example, pupils calculate the amount of compost required, determine the cost, and discuss shopping for materials. These real-life applications make learning relevant and meaningful. However, the planning and implementation of the progressive development of digital skills is underdeveloped.

Accreditations in health, fitness and nutrition, and animal care are effectively integrated into the curriculum. These support pupils' physical, social, and emotional development suitably in areas of their interest. However, there are limited opportunities for vocational learning within the curriculum. In addition, careers and work-related learning are underdeveloped. This inhibits the school's ability to prepare pupils for their next steps in learning or future employment.

Valuable discussions in school encourage pupils to research, discuss their findings, and explore their own beliefs and opinions, promoting critical thinking and the development of informed perspectives. For example, pupils discuss global issues such as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine along with historical conflicts including World War Two.

Teaching staff ensure that lessons are well planned and match the learning needs of pupils. They plan a wide variety of classroom activities that successfully and flexibly build on each other. In these stimulating and creative learning environments, teachers use imaginative resources well, with links to real life examples wherever

possible, for example by incorporating projects like carrying out a scavenger hunt on a beach. These projects not only foster practical understanding and responsibility but also enhance pupils' independent skills and self-sufficiency.

Staff demonstrate sound knowledge of all aspects of the curriculum. They provide clear and appropriate explanations for pupils and maintain a high level of engagement. Staff set clear objectives for learning sessions and employ effective questioning techniques to stimulate critical thinking and deeper understanding. However, the level of challenge within work provided is inconsistent and on occasions limits opportunities to further engage and develop essential skills in all pupils.

Teaching staff ensure that feedback offers valuable insights into pupils' performance. They clearly include what is going well and highlight the next steps for pupils to improve their work. Written feedback is appropriately provided with an evaluation of both effort and achievement.

Reports to parents and carers on their child's progress are produced regularly. These reports contain important information and inform parents and carers about the progress their child is making in important areas of development such as social and independence skills.

Care, support and guidance

Brynmorgan Villa is a welcoming and caring school. Staff know the pupils extremely well and over time develop trusting and effective working relationships with them. As a result, pupils engage with staff with increasing confidence.

The school plans for and supports new pupils when joining the school effectively. This ensures the school has a sound understanding of pupils' emotional and social needs on admission to the school. Further, a number of baseline assessments are undertaken to identify any further areas which require intervention and support. For example, the school identified that pupils had speech and language needs and trained a member of staff to deliver these sessions with pupils. As a consequence of sound processes for assessment and transition, the school is able to ensure they are meeting the ALN of its pupils.

The school has robust procedures to ensure annual review of pupils' individual development plans (IDPs) and statutory documentation are in place. These focus well on person-centred practice and clearly describe the progress pupils are making in school. In addition, the school provides detailed quarterly reviews of emotional development and progress to the relevant local authority.

The school benefits from the support of an external therapeutic team. This support provides the school with beneficial opportunities to share information from a range of helpful assessments of pupils' wider needs. In addition, the team offers valuable support and training to staff in an appropriate range of areas linked to the social, emotional and mental health needs of the pupils. As a result, staff understand how to support pupils' emotional needs well.

The education team, care staff and external therapists work collaboratively to produce up-to-date 'individual intervention plans' and 'individual reactive plans' for all pupils. These are shared and reviewed regularly with relevant staff. These plans contain a range of worthwhile strategies which focus appropriately on areas such as effective communication. As part of these documents there are also detailed positive behaviour plans that outline suitable strategies to support pupils to self-regulate.

The school benefits from partnership working with agencies such as the community police officer. This helps to support pupils to develop knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe. For example, police liaison officers deliver sessions on the dangers of knife crime and how to stay safe when using social media.

The school has recently appointed new members of staff which enhance the offer of support for pupils. For example, an engagement officer provides continuity for pupils during school holidays.

The strategic planning of careers advice and preparing for adulthood is in the very early stages of development. Further, the school's provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underdeveloped.

The school's recording, monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress and well-being, including attendance data and behaviour, are underdeveloped. Further, this limits the school's ability to show the impact of their work or recognise any patterns and trends that may affect the progress pupils are making.

The school records attendance consistently. However, recorded attendance at the time of the inspection was not accurate. In addition, there is no analysis of attendance at a whole-school level and monitoring engagement in learning within lessons is underdeveloped.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are safe. For example, it provides staff and pupils with relevant, appropriate information on how to keep themselves safe in all situations, including online safety. Leaders encourage all staff to understand their responsibility to provide a safe environment for pupils with a wide range of varied and complex needs. Although policies contain clear guidance for staff on processes to follow, they are not reinforced and monitored closely enough.

Safeguarding training for staff does not consider current Welsh legislation and guidance and recording of behavioural incidents and safeguarding concerns is not cohesive. Whilst school's arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are sound, the school's oversight of its safeguarding process is not robust enough.

Leadership and management

Leaders at Brynmorgan Villa have established and communicated a clear vision for the provision that focuses well on meeting all pupils' needs. They are particularly visible around the school, act as positive role models for pupils and provide valuable support for staff.

Leaders have successfully established a well-qualified and experienced team of education staff who collaborate well with each other and with staff working within the

linked care home. In addition, they have strong and beneficial relationships with the team providing therapeutic input.

Leaders have established a positive culture of collaboration and support amongst staff and have strengthened staff involvement and understanding as the school becomes more established. Staff feel empowered, supported and trusted and respond very well to the team culture within the school. For example, in their work to plan lessons, sequences of lessons and themes to ensure the learning offer for pupils is appropriate for their needs.

The unit lead and complex needs manager is a highly dedicated member of staff who works tirelessly to support the meeting of pupils needs. While they work passionately to try to fulfil all their leadership responsibilities this is not always possible. As a result, systems and processes for tracking and monitoring progress across the school are underdeveloped and lack clarity and precision. In addition, these very wide ranging and extensive responsibilities limit their capacity to remain up to date with national developments within education. For example, the requirements as a result of the new Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 or updates to Welsh Government legislation. This inhibits their ability to provide robust challenge about the school's work and ensure that processes and procedures are being followed appropriately by the staff team.

Education staff roles and responsibilities are set out in appropriate, generally generic, job descriptions. However, although staff have a secure understanding of their individual role, in many cases, job descriptions do not fully document the wide-ranging and extensive responsibilities of the post holders. This limits the ability of the proprietor to evaluate the leadership within the school and hold staff to account. Overall, the job descriptions of leaders and teaching staff do not provide a strong enough focus on responsibilities for pupil progress, improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.

The proprietor also holds the role as headteacher and head of education. They provide beneficial advice and support for the unit lead and complex needs manager and the school team. They know the school, the staff and the pupils very well, and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement. The proprietor plays an important role in setting the school's priorities in the school development plan. There are regular opportunities for them to meet with school leaders to discuss performance and to plan actions to address priorities for improvement. However, many of these meetings take place informally and the proprietor's involvement in the day-to-day running of the school inhibits their ability to act as a critical friend or challenge the unit lead and complex needs manager.

Self-evaluation activities are purposefully planned across the academic year and involve the whole staff team. These provide leaders with an honest and largely accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, they focus suitably on the progress pupils are making in their learning. The school uses external expertise effectively to evaluate its offer and identify improvements required. This support has provided useful guidance to the proprietor and the teaching staff and is beginning to inform the school development plan. However, on occasions the areas for improvement identified in quality assurance processes are not always focused upon sharply enough to become school improvement priorities.

Leaders have a good track record of improvement and have successfully addressed all recommendations from the last inspection. They evaluate progress and feedback regularly and are not afraid to amend their approaches or change direction if something is not working. As a result, systems and processes for tracking and monitoring progress across the school are underdeveloped and lack clarity and precision.

Staff engage constructively in processes that help guide their work, such as performance management. Leaders have recently reviewed and adapted their processes for performance management. Performance management targets are linked appropriately to the school development priorities. However, performance management processes are not linked clearly enough to staff's personal areas for development identified as part of quality assurance activities such as lesson observations.

Professional learning focuses well on ensuring that staff receive the training they need to support them in their roles working in a specialist residential setting. Staff value the professional learning programme provided by the school. In the last academic year, this programme has increasingly focused on developing staffs' understanding of the core skills of teaching pupils, for example training on pupils' learning styles and how effective questioning promotes learning. However, leaders do not maintain comprehensive records of training completed by the staff team or ensure that the mandatory training meets the requirements for an independent school in Wales.

Leaders promote safeguarding as a high priority at the school. Links with local authority safeguarding boards are secure. However, a lack of formality in implementation of the school's policies and procedures, including monitoring the implementation and appropriateness of mandatory training, weakens the provision at the school.

The school is not fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([Estyn Website](#))

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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