



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

A report on

Grace House

Date of inspection: April 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Grace House

Name of provider	Grace House
Proprietor	Educ8, part of the Your Chapter Ltd Group
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	3
Pupils of statutory school age	3
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	22/04/2024
<p>Grace House is an independent special school that provides education and care for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. The school is owned by Educ8, part of the Your Chapter Ltd Group, a specialist children's services agency that has independent special schools and care homes across England and Wales.</p> <p>The school provides educational placements for girls aged between 11 and 18 years of age. Currently, there are three pupils on roll. Pupils who attend the school are resident in the linked children's home that shares the site.</p> <p>The staff team comprises a headteacher supported by a teacher and an instructor. The headteacher has been in post since September 2023.</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

Grace House is a nurturing and welcoming school. It is led effectively, with robust processes in place for quality assurance activities and safeguarding processes. The headteacher is supported by a small, dedicated team of teaching staff, who strive for the best outcomes both academically and pastorally for the pupils in their care.

The proprietor plays an active role in the life of the school. They have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. The proprietor provides valuable support to the headteacher and is actively involved in all aspects of the school's work including improvement planning, recruitment, professional learning opportunities and quality assurance.

Across all aspects of the curriculum, teaching staff provide interesting and imaginative learning experiences. As a result, pupils engage successfully with their learning and make progress from their starting points. However, the use of the school's on-site outdoor areas to extend learning opportunities is underdeveloped.

The school's 'Wellbeing for Life' programme is a notable strength of the school. It successfully supports pupils to develop their knowledge of the wider world and develop beneficial and meaningful skills, preparing them well for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

The school has strong provision for careers guidance, which is well embedded. Pupils are provided with clear advice on their next steps, the skills and qualifications they may need to achieve for the next stage of their education or to go into the work place.

The school provides effective professional learning for staff, which includes opportunities to gain external qualifications, for example the National Professional Qualifications (NPQ's). Whole-school professional learning sessions, completed alongside other schools within the proprietor's group, support improvement to the quality of teaching and link appropriately to school development priorities.

The positive working relationship and communication between school and residential staff is a notable strength. Regular meetings occur between teaching staff, residential staff and members of the therapy team to discuss pupil progress and adjust the provision where necessary.

The school complies with all of 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 meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

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 Further develop the outdoor area to provide more opportunities to develop and support pupils' well-being and learning needs

What happens next

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' wellbeing 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

Across Grace House, teaching staff know their pupils very well. They use this knowledge highly effectively to ensure that teaching approaches and learning activities are matched closely to pupils' needs. This approach is particularly successful due to the strong positive working relationships teaching staff have with pupils, based on mutual trust and respect. Their sensitive support of pupils and positive relationships are a significant strength of the school. This has a significant and positive impact on pupils' outcomes and well-being.

The enthusiastic staff team are energetic practitioners who share leaders' ambitions to do their very best for the pupils in the school. Staff take pride in modelling professional behaviours and attitudes. Teaching staff successfully create a calm and productive working atmosphere where pupils feel valued, safe and ready to learn, but are still challenged to achieve as highly as possible.

The curriculum is detailed and well planned across the school and is effectively tailored at an individual level. The curriculum meets the requirements for the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2024.

Teaching staff take good account of pupils' prior learning when introducing skills or concepts in literacy and numeracy. They adapt the curriculum for pupils where required. For example, each pupil has a personalised mathematics scheme of work for the year to address identified gaps in knowledge.

Teachers' planning includes meaningful opportunities for pupils to have 'hands on' experiences as much as possible. For example, when looking at joints in the human body, pupils practically demonstrate the process of cartilage being worn down in a joint using sandpaper and a piece of wood.

The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning. However, planning for the progressive development of digital skills across the curriculum is still in the early stages of development.

Whilst the curriculum covers Welsh history and culture appropriately, the opportunities for pupils to use and develop their Welsh language within the curriculum are limited.

The curriculum has a comprehensive personal, social and emotional (PSE) scheme of work, which is effectively delivered in collaboration with the school's 'Wellbeing for Life' programme. This supports pupils to develop their knowledge of the wider world and develop beneficial and meaningful skills, preparing them well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The curriculum provides pupils the opportunity to personalise their learning alongside completing core subjects, which promotes positive attitudes towards learning. Teaching staff effectively support pupils to explore a range of meaningful career options and complete relevant qualifications to support progression to further education settings and employment. Pupils have the opportunity to complete Entry Level, Functional Skills, and GCSE qualifications in both core subjects and within personal interests and career aims, for example in GCSE art and sociology. In addition, the school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to achieve accredited learning in a range of subjects linked to both their personal interests and progress through the 'Wellbeing for Life' programme.

The school curriculum provides pupils opportunities to effectively enhance their learning and personal development through extra-curricular activities, for example participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and taking part in rock climbing, swimming and gym sessions.

Across all areas of the curriculum, teaching staff provide interesting and imaginative learning experiences that engage pupils successfully. They regularly make use of the local community and surroundings as part of learning experiences. However, the use of the school's on-site outdoor areas to extend learning opportunities is underdeveloped.

Teaching staff encourage pupils to be creative and offer a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills through art and music. For example, pupils confidently perform a song in French by André Rieu in front of peers, staff and visitors and produce creative pencil drawings in the style of Emma McNally.

The school has a robust and coherent approach to establishing pupils' starting points across the curriculum and measuring the progress they make over time. They use a variety of standardised tests to track progress very effectively. This helps to inform learning plans and provide clear next steps for teaching and learning.

Teaching staff use assessment activities, feedback and a range of different types of questions purposefully during lessons. Further, they provide skilful feedback for pupils that corrects misconceptions and helps them improve their work in lessons. For example, they use regular 'diagnostic feedback' every six lessons to clearly identify to pupils what is working well and what could improve. This feedback also allows opportunities for pupils to respond to comments from teachers. However, their use of this opportunity is limited.

The school provides valuable reports on pupils' progress to parents, carers and social workers. Parents and carers highly value the regular and detailed communication from the school regarding pupil progress, attendance and well-being.

Care, support and guidance

Grace House is caring and welcoming. There is a strong and determined focus on promoting pupils' emotional health and well-being through the school's 'Wellbeing for Life' programme. The high levels of care and support provided contribute successfully to pupils feeling safe and having good levels of attendance.

Staff, at all levels, are relentless in their efforts to address any barriers to learning and engagement. As a result, pupils engage fully in their education with increasing levels of independence.

Teaching staff gain a comprehensive understanding of the social and emotional needs of their pupils through a valuable range of baseline assessments and the 'Wellbeing for Life' programme. The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) from the wider organisation provides specialist advice and support, including identification of pupils' additional learning needs and appropriate methods to support them. In addition, where required, the school use specialist advice, therapy and guidance to meet these needs.

The school develops a valuable range of helpful documentation to support staff, such as individual risk assessments, individual pupil development plans and assessment data.

Teaching staff involve pupils in the creation of useful 'solution focused behaviour plans'. These aid pupils and teaching staff to identify emotional triggers and support pupils' understanding of how to manage their emotions effectively.

A notable strength of the school is the positive professional relationships pupils build with school staff and their peers during their time at school. As a result, pupils demonstrate important skills such as tolerance, respect and how to listen to one another.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of worthwhile trips and activities which help enhance their understanding of the wider world, for example visits to Shrewsbury Museum, watching pantomimes at the theatre and a visit to the 'Secret Nuclear Bunker'.

The school's provision for careers guidance is strong. This provides pupils with clear advice on their next steps and the skills and qualifications they may need to achieve for the next stage of their education. The strategic planning of careers advice, preparing for adulthood and living independently is well embedded.

The school has developed a purposeful and bespoke approach to personal development. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their ideas on a variety of themes through both PSE lessons and in the wider curriculum. Staff at the school ensure that content is responsive to pupils' needs and current issues, for example through discussions on 'sextortion', drug abuse, vaping and online safety. In addition, the school appropriately supports pupils to discuss

important areas related to spiritual, moral and cultural development, for example through exploring different faiths and beliefs, political views and ideologies.

Teachers have high expectations for pupils and encourage them to develop their skills in resilience, managing their emotions and development of a thirst and love for learning.

The school celebrates pupil success regularly through an in-house reward programme, end of year prom and reward trips. Pupils have the opportunity to choose their reward trips through pupil voice activities, for example a recent trip to Alton Towers.

The positive working relationship and communication between school and residential staff is a notable strength. Teachers, residential staff and members of the therapy team meet regularly to discuss progress and adjust the provision for pupils.

In promoting a culture of safeguarding, the proprietor and headteacher ensure that all members of the school community understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Staff are provided with useful and regular training so that they respond to any concerns diligently and promptly. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are clear and robust.

Leadership and management

Leadership of Grace House is highly effective. Leaders have a clear vision, which clearly guides the work of the school. The proprietor and headteacher have a strong sense of purpose and strive collaboratively for the highest quality in all aspects of the school's work. They create a positive and nurturing environment where every pupil can succeed, feel safe and fulfil their potential. Further, this vision extends to the school curriculum and 'Wellbeing for Life' programme, which is a key strength of the school.

The proprietor and headteacher regularly undertake an appropriate range of quality assurance activities, including reviewing pupils' work, learning walks and lesson observations. These processes for quality assurance and improvement planning focus well on pupils' progress and the standards they achieve.

The headteacher tracks and analyses data about pupils' behaviour, attendance and well-being effectively and uses a range of suitable strategies to identify trends and address issues when they occur. There are robust whole-school systems in place to track, monitor and evaluate the progress pupils make over time.

The proprietor plays an active role in the life of the school. They provide valuable support for important aspects of the school's work including improvement planning, recruitment, professional learning opportunities and quality assurance.

The proprietor and the company's education board, which includes the organisation's ALNCo, carefully consider the information gathered during quality assurance processes, produce informative summaries of the overarching themes and, as a result, have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school.

Leaders have high expectations of staff and have developed a highly committed and dedicated staff team. There is a robust system of line management at all levels. There are comprehensive staff learning development plans and performance management processes to ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of their role and career pathways. These are highly valued by staff.

The school provides effective professional learning for staff, including valuable themes such as therapeutic approaches and equality and diversity, along with annual updates such as safeguarding training. Whole-school professional learning sessions across the organisation support improvements to the quality of teaching and link appropriately to school development priorities. The wider staff team support each other to learn from the effective practice that exists across the organisation. For example, subject specialists have led sessions to support colleagues to develop curriculum planning in their specialist areas.

Leaders manage the budget appropriately, ensuring that the school's priorities, particularly in terms of professional learning, are well funded. The school uses the pupil development grant appropriately to increase the school's capacity to support pupils' learning and well-being. For example, the grant has funded guitar and rock climbing lessons to help pupils to widen their learning experiences and support their emotional well-being.

Teaching staff have a small, delegated budget to use for the day-to-day running of the school. However, the lack of clarity around the structure of the school finances means that the staff are not confident in being able to plan sufficiently for long-term development of the curriculum or implement key priorities within the classroom, for example the development of the outside space to further enhance pupils' learning experiences and provide additional areas to support pupils' well-being.

The school complies with all of 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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