



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

A report on

Bettws Lifehouse

Date of inspection: July 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Bettws Lifehouse

Bettws Lifehouse is an independent day school and is registered to provide education for pupils aged seven to eighteen years. Currently, the school is providing education for 18 pupils aged seven to fourteen years as older pupils are generally educated at an independent school in England, which is part of the wider Lifehouse provision. Pupils have a range of complex needs including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).

All pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan (EHCP). Most pupils are placed by local authorities in England.

The headteacher of the school has been in position since February 2020 and is supported by a team of seven teachers and fourteen teaching assistants. The executive headteacher is one of the proprietors and has been in post since the school opened. The school's last monitoring visit was in July 2023.

Main findings

Strengths

Staff at Bettws Lifehouse place the needs of pupils at the centre of all they do. A highly flexible approach to curriculum design and delivery ensures that pupils' learning and well-being needs are responded to effectively and in a timely manner.

Relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. Staff know the pupils well and have a strong understanding of their social, emotional, and behavioural needs. They establish and maintain trusting relationships with pupils, and this contributes to the high level of pupil engagement and positive behaviour. As a result, over time nearly all pupils make strong progress.

Pupils are highly engaged in their learning activities, such as incorporating a range of features into a PowerPoint presentation or problem solving to investigate the effect of angles on the bounce achieved by a marble. They exhibit resilience and perseverance, show respect and support each other well.

There are strong links between Bettws Lifehouse and the upper school, which is located in England. The school supports pupils' transitions when they join and leave the school highly effectively.

The proprietors and headteacher have a strong sense of purpose and work together to strive to achieve high quality in all aspects of the school's work. They create a positive and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, can succeed, and fulfil their potential.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 inspected during this visit.

Areas for development

The school is in the early stages of embedding changes required to meet the new Independent School Standards, for example incorporating aspects of the UN Rights of the Child into the curriculum.

Incorporating careers education into the curriculum for the younger years is in the early stages of development.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 Continue to develop specific aspects of the curriculum in response to the new requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- R2 Extend careers guidance and support into the younger years

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1 Continue to strengthen the careers advice and guidance for younger pupils

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has made suitable progress towards addressing this recommendation. A range of initiatives have been piloted to strengthen the careers advice and guidance for Year 9 pupils.

Since the last visit, the member of staff in charge of careers has effectively reviewed and evaluated provision for careers education and made good use of the expertise of staff in the other Lifehouse school.

After evaluating the existing provision, the school's career development policy has been updated and careers lessons have been strengthened. Year 9 pupils have achieved AQA unit awards including preparation for working life and exploring career pathways. As a result of these actions, Year 9 pupils now receive stronger support and guidance as they begin to consider possible career paths.

In addition, there are plans in place to further enhance careers provision across the school through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, for example by the introduction of the topic 'when I grow up' and the introduction of a Bettws careers fair.

R2 Continue to review the current assessment framework within the health and well-being area of learning

Since the last visit, the school has continued to review its arrangements for the assessment and tracking of pupil progress within the health and well-being area of learning. This includes tracking and monitoring progress in physical skills, cooking and PSHE. This is now in line with the approach to assessment across the rest of the school.

Staff have strengthened the planning within the well-being curriculum, which now includes purposeful learning objectives and clear links to skills across the curriculum.

Within the well-being curriculum, pupils access a wide range of interesting and motivational well-being activities such as pond dipping, gardening, horse riding and animal care. Pupils benefit from these activities and, since the last visit, the school has introduced accreditation opportunities, which provide valuable evidence for the knowledge and skills pupils develop in these activities.

Staff record progress using an electronic tracking tool and leaders evaluate progress within class groups on a regular basis. Leaders provide appropriate challenge to the staff team as part of a robust discussion of learning and progress. As a result, leaders have strengthened their understanding of the progress pupils make in both well-being and skills within the health and well-being area of learning.

Compliance with the standards for registration

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect Standard 1.

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 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 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 2024

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 2024. 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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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