



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

A report on

Carla House School

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Carla House School

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| Name of provider | Carla House School |
| Proprietor | Your Chapter |
| Local authority | Wrexham County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider | English |
| Type of school | Independent |
| Residential provision? | Yes |
| Number of pupils on roll | 4 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 2 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | |
| Start date of inspection | 17/06/2024 |
| <p>Carla House School is an independent school in a rural setting near Wrexham. The school is owned by Your Chapter, a company providing education, care and therapy for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural needs. Pupils who attend the school are resident in the on-site children's home. The school provides education for a maximum of five girls aged 11 to 18 years. Currently, there are four pupils on roll. The headteacher has been in post since October 2022. The work of the school is overseen by the education director.</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

Carla House School is a welcoming community, where pupils feel safe and valued. Leaders plan carefully for transition when pupils join the school, supporting them to develop an individualised timetable that reflects their interests and future aspirations suitably. As a result, pupils settle quickly when they join the school and attend regularly. This represents significant progress for nearly all pupils.

Leaders have a clear values-led vision for the school. They aim to provide a flexible curriculum offer and range of learning experiences to enable all pupils to succeed. This has been recently strengthened to include opportunities for gaining GSCE qualifications alongside accredited courses. However, the school's focus on the progressive development of skills is underdeveloped.

Staff collaborate positively to develop a secure understanding of pupils' emotional and social needs and build positive working relationships with them during their time at the school.

The school has a particular focus on careers education, ensuring that pupils are helped to identify their next steps when they leave school. This is strengthened through the use of accreditation and work experience placements. As a result, pupils develop their ambition and make positive transitions on to further education. This is a notable strength of the school.

Leaders collect a range of relevant information to evaluate the work of the school and drive improvements. The school has made positive progress in addressing the recommendations from the most recent monitoring visit. However, much work in this area is newly established and quality assurance processes do not consistently consider the impact of provision on learning.

The school has an appropriate focus on keeping pupils safe. Staff have a secure understanding of their role in this process. Leaders are developing a sound safeguarding culture.

The school benefits from the support and challenge of a wider organisation to support its work. For example, staff benefit from a range of meaningful professional learning opportunities, which focus on teaching, learning and leadership. However, organisational processes do not consistently consider the specific Welsh context of the school, and as a result, important information can be difficult to access or incorrect.

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 Strengthen approaches to the planning and delivery of learning activities to improve the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum
- R2 Refine roles, responsibilities and systems across the wider organisation to support the smooth operational management of the school
- R3 Refine quality assurance and improvement planning processes to embed and sustain improvements

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' 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

Overall, teaching staff understand pupils' needs well and have high expectations for their progress in learning. This expectation is mirrored by the pupils, who talk ambitiously about their future and ongoing education. These high aspirations are reflected through recent developments to the curriculum offer. This has resulted in pupils completing GCSE programmes, gaining relevant accreditations and qualifications and securing future placements to continue their studies. This is a valuable improvement since the time of the most recent monitoring visit.

The curriculum at Carla House School is broad, balanced and reflective of the individual needs of the pupils. This includes consideration of each pupil's starting point. Staff collate important pupil information through detailed case studies such as baseline assessments, pupil interests, strengths, areas of need and aspiration.

The curriculum provides purposeful work-related experiences such as volunteering at the local stables and work experience at a local nursery. These experiences are linked to pupils' ambitions and support informed choices in relation to future careers and the world of work. Where relevant, these activities are enhanced through specific accreditations, such as those related to equine care and the health and beauty industry. Combined, the practical experience and vocational accreditations provide pupils with valuable preparation for their future pathways in the world of work.

There are a range of appropriate learning experiences available for pupils to explore in relation to their health and wellbeing. This includes cooking sessions in school and physical education sessions in the community. For example, badminton and dance sessions provide pupils with opportunities to develop important skills such as listening to and following instructions, co-ordination, balance and fitness.

Overall, teaching staff plan a suitable range of activities to engage pupil interest. Where activities are practical, they successfully capture pupils' enthusiasm and engagement. Learning experiences are sensitive to pupil well-being and this is well matched to the school's ethos and vision and the approach set out in the curriculum policy.

The school provides a calm and understanding approach to teaching, which is adaptive to individual needs. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to share their views about their work. Teaching staff are considerate of these views and where teaching is most effective it is underpinned by the strong and nurturing relationships between staff and pupils.

Teaching takes place in small groups or on a 1:1 basis; this provides regular opportunities for the adaptation of curriculum planning and delivery. As a result, teaching staff monitor and assess pupil well-being frequently and adjust planning and activities where appropriate. Teaching staff work cohesively to achieve this and implement a reflective approach to planning which is evaluated through daily team discussion and reflection. This has a strong and positive impact on pupils' well-being. However, planning and tracking do not consistently consider the progressive development of specific key skills relevant to their individual learning profiles and journeys.

Teaching staff track and reflect on pupils' progress using a range of useful tools, observations and professional skill. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and progress, for example through written responses to six weekly diagnostic assessments and daily opportunities for verbal feedback. Pupils respond positively to verbal feedback when this is given constructively and is clearly linked to progress and next steps. Reports to parents and carers are produced termly. They are clear and informative, giving information about pupils' learning and progress. However, the prioritisation of individual skills is underdeveloped in these processes.

Care, support and guidance

Staff at Carla House School provide pupils with a caring and nurturing environment. They know the pupils' needs and interests well and are empathetic to their emotional needs. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe at school.

The school has a comprehensive and beneficial transition programme for new pupils, which supports them well in adapting to a new environment and making progress from their starting points. The school, in conjunction with pupils, creates bespoke timetables, which support learning through their personal interests and aspirations. As a result, nearly all pupils improve their attendance and participation in learning consistently during their time at the school.

The school offers beneficial opportunities for pupils to explore future career options through sessions with an independent careers' advisor and completion of work experience. Additionally, pupils are supported to investigate and apply for potential courses in further education colleges such as equine care and health and beauty. As a result, pupils are ambitious about gaining accreditations and qualifications that will enable them to successfully enter the world of work. This is a notable strength of the school.

The school supports pupils to develop their understanding of staying safe through personal, social and health education (PSE) suitably. For example, pupils develop their understanding through class discussions and completion of units via an online

learning platform. This addresses key topics such as bullying, safe relationships, mental well-being and substance abuse.

The school broadens pupils' understanding of the wider community through organising local trips. For example, pupils have visited Shrewsbury Prison where they learnt about crime and punishment across the centuries and debated views on capital punishment.

The school has produced useful one-page profiles about pupils with detailed baseline assessments and learning strategies, which aid staff to support pupils to make academic progress. Therapeutic assessments, which are completed within the first few months of pupils joining the school, further enhance staff's knowledge of how best to meet the emotional needs of pupils.

Processes for helping pupils to understand expectations of their behaviour are clear, and staff use the school's system consistently to record incidents of low-level behaviour alongside recording rewards pupils have been awarded. Incidents of behaviour are monitored by the headteacher to assess patterns and put interventions in place where required. At the time of the inspection, pupils displayed positive behaviour and engagement in their learning.

Pupils have opportunities through regular student voice discussions with staff to contribute to decisions that affect their life in the school. As a result, the school is responsive to pupils' needs and requests, for example where a pupil may wish to try something new out, participate in an event, or attend a trip to a place of interest leaders work diligently to provide these experiences for pupils.

The school provides a suitable range of opportunities to enrich pupils' learning and well-being through a varied offer of extra-curricular activities, for example homework club, singing club, horse-riding, dance sessions and completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Staff from the school and the residential setting have positive working relationships and clear communication is in place through daily handover discussions. Education staff, residential staff and members of the therapy team meet regularly to discuss pupil progress, adopting a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach.

Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding. There are clearly identified designated safeguarding persons (DSPs) for the school. Reporting and monitoring of safeguarding disclosures is done through an online portal enabling the DSPs to act swiftly to concerns. The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe do not give cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Carla House has developed a friendly and welcoming community where pupils are supported to develop high aspirations for their future lives.

The headteacher has a clear pupil-centred vision and strives for the best for pupils. Her work is driven by clear values. Leaders have developed a positive team who work to build professional and constructive relationships with pupils. As a result, staff

feel well supported by the headteacher in their day-to-day work and collaborate effectively to engage pupils.

All staff share the same vision for the work of the school, promoting positive outcomes for each pupil. Leaders have developed strong links with the residential care team to best support pupils, and this is further strengthened by participation in the multidisciplinary process with the therapeutic team. However, there have been recent changes to staffing across many levels of the school. Leaders have worked with other settings within the organisation to minimise the disruption to pupils and deploy staff effectively.

Leaders demonstrate a flexible approach to all aspects of school life to meet the needs of pupils, for example linking with residential staff to plan careful transitions when they join the school, or using pupil input to develop timetables linked to interests and aspirations. This is highly successful in engaging pupils who arrive at school punctually and attend well. This is a notable strength and represents a significant improvement from attendance and engagement in previous education placements.

The school benefits from support and challenge from senior leaders within the wider organisation, such as the education director. Leaders benefit from support in a number of important areas, such as safer recruitment, health and safety and access to professional learning. Further, this supports with school self-evaluation and improvement planning. However, across the wider organisation there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and other core functions. Systems do not consistently support leaders to access important information readily and, as a result, some information is difficult to access, disorganised or inaccurate.

Senior leaders promote beneficial joint working across the organisation, notably within the Welsh schools, for example sharing best practice with other schools, re-deploying staff to enrich learning experiences or providing mentoring opportunities for staff. As a result, leaders are developing leadership skills and considering ways to innovate to meet the needs of pupils.

Leaders collect a range of first-hand information to evaluate the work of the school, for example through audits, learning walks and work scrutiny. Leaders have high expectations of the school and outcomes for pupils, which is evident in these processes. However, too often, quality assurance processes focus on compliance and description rather than quality and evaluation. Further, quality assurance activities do not consistently focus on the impact of teaching on learning.

The headteacher has started to use a range of information to develop a robust self-evaluation process. This is newly established and it is too soon to evaluate its impact. Leaders have developed a school development plan, guided by the wider strategic priorities. Since the time of the previous monitoring visit, leaders have responded suitably to recommendations and brought about important improvements at the school.

Leaders ensure that professional learning opportunities have an appropriate focus on teaching, learning, curriculum and meeting the needs of pupils. Staff benefit from a

range of relevant and beneficial professional learning such as completing national professional leadership qualifications. As a result, the support and challenge of leaders have improved since the time of the most recent monitoring visit.

Leaders have developed a pleasant school environment with relevant resources. However, the outdoor learning environment is less well developed. The headteacher uses the school budget innovatively to provide an engaging education for pupils. She plans to use pupil premium money and links to the local community meaningfully to enrich pupils' learning experiences and prepare them well for their next steps, for example funding an eyelash technician course, organising dance lessons and securing work experience placements.

The school complies fully 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:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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