



Inspection Report on

**Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn Residential Unit
Mynydd Garnlwyd Road
Morrison
Swansea
SA6 7PA**

Date Inspection Completed

08/11/2023

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About Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn Residential Unit

Type of care provided	Residential Special School
Registered Provider	City and County of Swansea Adults and Children's Services
Registered places	18
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	20 and 22 November 2017
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.

Summary

Pen y Bryn school provides a residential service for up to five children and young people at a time. Places are offered for one night a week but can be long term. The service operates during term times from Mondays to Thursdays.

Care staff understand children's needs very well and work in partnership with parents to provide suitable and appropriate care, support and activities.

There are systems in place to ensure the service operates smoothly and safely, care staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are enthusiastic and passionate about the work they do.

CIW made recommendations relating to the environment at the last inspection, and while some improvements and refurbishments have taken place, children's bedrooms in particular do not provide a pleasant, welcoming environment.

The last inspection also found quality assurance arrangements were not in line with the requirements under which the service must operate (National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools) and we found little evidence that actions has been taken to address this.

Recent and upcoming changes to management arrangements are expected to help address some of the shortcomings and further develop the service.

Well-being

Children's rights to a voice and choice are promoted. Care staff understand their communication preferences and support children to express their views on what they eat and how they spend their time. The interim manager and care staff are keen to develop the ways in which children's wishes are gathered and captured. Children's preferences are recorded but care staff offer alternatives and new experiences. Improvements are required to ensure children's privacy and dignity is protected when they are spending time in their bedrooms.

Children experience care and support from a consistent staff team who understand their needs, preferences and routines very well. We saw they were comfortable with their care staff. As well as the permanent members of staff, the school employs some of the teaching assistants (who work in the classrooms), as care officers either for the short 'breakfast shifts' (7.00 to 9.00 a.m.) or if there are gaps in the rota caused by absences. This means staff working in the residential unit are familiar to the children.

Suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard children. Care staff receive safeguarding training and know when to report concerns. There have been no safeguarding incidents but where other actual or potential concerns are noted about a child's wellbeing, these are recorded and shared with the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which includes the nominated lead safeguarding officers. The required safe recruitment checks are conducted before care staff are employed to work in the home.

Good support is provided to promote children's physical and mental health. Plans record children's health care needs and how they should be met. Children are encouraged to try new things and eat as healthy a diet as possible in the limited time they spend in the unit. The school uses a system called 'behaviour watch' to make detailed records of children's behaviour and plan individual responses and interventions. Detailed behaviour support plans ensure care staff have good guidance on children's presentations and behaviours and how to respond. Care staff know how children might present if they are worried or anxious and can respond appropriately.

Arrangements are in place to administer medication safely and in accordance with children's prescriptions and care staff undertake medication training. The manager oversees the management of medicines within the service.

Improvements are required to provide children with an environment which supports their well-being. The home is kept clean and tidy and there are systems in place to ensure potential risks and hazards are minimised.

Care and Support

Each child has a personal plan, which includes what is important to them and what care staff will do to support them. These are detailed, straightforward and provide care staff with the information they need to meet children's care and support needs on a day-to-day basis. These are reviewed at child-centred reviews. It is not current practice for the manager of the residential unit to be involved in these reviews despite the expectation that children's stays in the unit are part of a 24-hour curriculum approach.

Similarly, the manager is not involved in the decision for a child to be allocated a place in the unit which is also made at child centred reviews. We were told the manager is consulted once the decision has been made by the school so they can consider matching with other children. We were told it is hoped the manager or a representative from the unit can be involved in the children's reviews in future, but this seems a matter that could be resolved quickly and easily and would strengthen communication and a 'team around the child' approach. The criteria, processes and arrangements for agreeing the residential unit is suitable for a child should be set out in a policy and set of procedures.

Care staff are proactive and creative in seeking out community activities and if possible and weather permitting there is an offsite outing each evening. These are planned, risk assessed and purposeful as regards promoting children's outcomes such as developing life, independence and/or social skills. Additional care staff on shift would enable children to have one to one support so that they can attend activities individually. On the day of inspection all the children and staff were involved in taking a child home because there would not have been sufficient staff to supervise if some had stayed in the unit. We were told the children "love going out in the minibus", and it was combined with another activity so was not just a ride in the minibus.

On the second day of inspection there was a planned walk and a visit to a supermarket where the children could practice or learn skills such as purchasing an item of their choice and using the check out.

Children also spend time relaxing in their rooms or in the communal area using their tablets or watching TV. However, they cannot always do what they want, when they want because of repeated problems with the unit's internet connectivity. At inspection we saw one child in distress as they were not able to use their tablet for communication or enjoyment because the unit's Wi-Fi was not working. Other children could not watch their choice of programme or YouTube videos for the same reason. Lack of access to the internet also impacts on care staff's ability to carry out administration tasks when opportunities arise.

Children have positive relationships with care staff supporting them. We saw care staff spending time with children, listening, and providing support with day-to-day activities.

Children are supported to do the things they enjoy, which enhances their sense of well-being. Care staff know children's interests which are recorded in their plans. Risk assessments and detailed weekly plans for each shift are developed a week in advance which outline: staff on duty, medication, key worker targets, activities and meals. This helps to ensure shifts run smoothly because children have their needs met and care staff are clear what is expected of them.

Environment

The premises are suitable in size and consistent with the description in the service's statement of purpose, but improvements must be made to the accommodation. At present there are areas and aspects which do not provide children with a warm, comfortable environment which meets their needs. There is evidence of a lack of financial investment in the unit.

The corridors and some other areas of the home, including bedrooms were plain and without colour. There was a lack of soft furnishings, murals, posters or pictures to create a homely, vibrant and inviting place for children to spend time.

Each child has the use of the same bedroom every time they spend the night. However, the beds are old, fixed to the floor and wall, made of plywood and give an institutional look to bedrooms. Curtains were old and mismatched; one was not fixed to the curtain rail and another not appropriate in style for the children staying in the room. The bedrooms are small and there is little storage space. Children's items such as bedding and blankets were stored on chairs or in a plastic box between stays while other children made use of the room. The bedrooms do not have electrical sockets. This meant they could not have bedside lamps, televisions or other media in their rooms. One bedroom had the blind closed, due to condensation with the water dripping down the wall. The heating was on, but the room was very cold.

Bedding is not always in good condition and should be replaced regularly. We saw pillows and duvets which were old and thin. The internal filling of one of the duvets was spilling out.

One of the bathrooms had recently been refurbished, but the ceiling was black with mould due to poor ventilation, the toilets and another shower room were cold and there was mould and damp on the walls and ceiling.

At the last inspection we advised the responsible individual of the need to ensure the glass panes in bedroom doors which face a corridor which is lit up overnight, are covered in a suitable manner. This issue has not been addressed. Children's dignity and privacy is not being protected and they cannot sleep in a dark room if it is their preference. One child's admissions information states they prefer to sleep in the dark and the school should be able to facilitate this.

Some rooms were very cold when we inspected. We were told the heating system has been problematic for a long time whereby sometimes the radiators would not heat up and at other times would radiate too much heat, so it was difficult to maintain a suitable temperature. We were told the heating system had been checked by building services and deemed satisfactory when clearly it is not. This was raised as a concern at the last inspection.

There is a small TV room and a large airy communal space with a TV, settees and large dining table. Children sit there and eat together with care staff but also use it to help with meal preparation, do arts and crafts or play with toys.

There is a well equipped sensory room. However, it cannot be used whenever children want because the heating does not work effectively, as was the case when we inspected. We were told children sometimes have to wear their coats when using the room which is clearly not conducive to a relaxing sensory environment.

There is a small garden to the rear of the property, which children can use when weather permits and is secure. However, the external play areas were unkempt and hazardous in parts due to the uneven surfaces. There was no evidence of outdoor play equipment and there were weeds and broken furniture scattered in one area.

Procedures are in place to ensure confidential information is stored securely. There are regular health and safety checks as part of the daily routine of the home, including fridge and freezer temperatures and fire safety equipment. Children have individual personal evacuation plans. Notwithstanding, the complexities of children's needs there is an expectation that fire evacuation drills take place which currently they do not. To mitigate against this, at each shift handover care staff discuss who would do what and the support arrangements for each child in the event of a fire or the fire alarm sounding. The headteacher gave an undertaking to ensure fire evacuation drills do take place going forward as these happen in school. The service provider promotes hygienic practices and manages risk of infection.

Leadership and Management

The service provider sets out how the home will meet the needs of children in the school's statement of purpose, but this needs to be amended and modified so that it reflects the current service provided. The school does not currently provide information about the service in a format or formats suitable to the needs of children who use the service.

The unit has experienced a period of several years of change and uncertainty. This may go some way to explain the lack of progress towards the recommendations CIW made at the last inspection and an apparent lack of focus on improving and developing the service. The unit closed for a considerable period due to the Covid pandemic followed by the long-term absence of a permanent manager. Those in interim or acting manager positions have not had dedicated management time which is partly because they choose to cover gaps in rotas to ensure consistency for the children. However, the effect of this is inadequate support for those who work in the home in terms of regular supervision, annual appraisals and team meetings. Staffing numbers are barely sufficient and sometimes insufficient. This will continue to negatively impact on the choices and activities children who stay at the unit are able to enjoy.

An interim manager has recently been appointed who has a relevant qualification and oversees the day-to-day running of the residential unit. There is now a greater sense of order and consistency, and the conditions now seem to be in place to make changes and improvements. Staff have ideas and a desire to develop and improve the service for the benefit of the children and young people who use it. However, they also felt there was a disconnect between the residential unit and the school, despite being located in the same grounds and operating under the same leadership team.

At the last inspection we highlighted the need for *"a set weekly budget for the residency to cover food and activities as it is not acceptable for staff to have to pay for food for young people from their own pocket"*. At this inspection care staff told us the arrangements for ordering food are still not working effectively and sometimes staff are waiting for weeks to be reimbursed when they have had to purchase essential items such as fresh fruit for the children out of their own pockets. There should be an urgent review of the system for financing the day-to-day expenditure required.

Quality assurance systems do not meet the requirements of legislation. Arrangements as set out in National Minimum Standards have not been put in place:

- For a responsible person to visit the unit home at the required frequency to monitor and sign certain records.
- For a nominated person or persons to visit, monitor and provide a written report on the welfare of children who stay in the home.
- To ensure required policies, procedures and guidance for staff are in place.

National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools (Wales)	Areas where action is required
24.2	The school's residential accommodation is not decorated and maintained to a standard which creates a pleasant, homely environment, appropriate to the age and characteristics of the children being accommodated
24.5	Children are not always provided with suitable bedding and lighting or window coverings.
24.14	Lighting and heating within the residential unit is not satisfactory throughout.
26.5	Children do not know the emergency evacuation procedures for the school, including those for use at night, in case of fire, or regularly practise such evacuation through fire drills.
28.5	The school's staffing levels are not always appropriate to meet children's individual needs and to allow for the manager and care staff to fulfil all their duties and responsibilities.
29.1	Staff have not all undertaken appropriate training to equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children
30.2	Care staff have not received one to one supervision from a senior member of staff every half term.
30.7	Staff are not provided with the range of written guidance on procedure and practice in accordance with Appendix 3 of the NMS for Residential Special Schools.
32.2	The Head Teacher of the school or senior members of staff delegated by the Head Teacher to do so, have not monitored and signed the records specified in the standard to identify any patterns or issues requiring action, and take any required follow up or consequential action.
32.4	The Head Teacher of the school has not carried out and recorded in writing, an annual review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children, and an internal assessment of its compliance with NMS. Reports have not been submitted to the governing body with items requiring attention incorporated into the school's development plan.
33.1	The governing body for the school, has not arranged for one of their number or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half-term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school

Summary of Non-Compliance

Status	What each means
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people’s well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)

Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement

Regulation	Summary	Status
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N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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Date Published 20/12/2023