

Mark Lazarus  
Manager  
Hillside Secure Children's Centre  
Burnside  
Neath  
SA11 1UL

19 October 2015

Dear Mark

### **Inspection of Hillside Secure Children's Centre**

As you know, Alun Connick HMI and Gill Sims HMI visited your centre recently in order to monitor the progress made since the last inspection visit in July 2014.

#### **Outcome of the monitoring visit**

Since the previous visit, a greater proportion of referrals are by social services and fewer are through the justice system. This has required the centre to retarget the services it offers.

There have been several changes in the leadership and management personnel within the centre. The new senior management team work well together. As a result, care staff and education staff now work well together to meet learners' care and education needs. They communicate well with each other to ensure that all staff understand how they can help learners to make good progress.

Overall, teachers have responded well to developing their leadership roles and make good use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance learners' participation in the classroom.

As a result of the visit, we are content that progress has been made against all the recommendations and good progress has been made in some areas.

#### **Progress against previous recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: Review the overall management of the centre to ensure that education is prioritised.**

**This recommendation has been fully addressed.**

The local authority, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, continues to support the centre well. It provides useful guidance and challenge to ensure that the centre makes effective progress towards its strategic aims and the objectives in its post inspection action plan. The Director of Social Services, Health and Housing presents reports to the local authority's scrutiny community to ensure that elected members are well informed of the centre's progress.

The Headteacher of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School (CSCS) now acts as an executive at Hillside. This has improved the centre's ability to respond to management challenges within the provision by accessing a broader range of skills. For example, when the previous education manager left, the executive head seconded an interim manager from the comprehensive school until the centre made a permanent appointment.

A recovery board remains in place, following the inspection of 2013, to hold the centre to account for the education provision offered to children and young people. The executive head reports to this board, which monitors progress towards the centre's improvement targets well. The centre's education staff also report to the board on what they are achieving within their delegated management roles. This has encouraged staff to take responsibility for a range of initiatives, such as quality improvement, and literacy and numeracy.

Staff motivation has continued to improve and they make a good contribution to the development of the centre. For example, centre staff identified that the reduction of services from Careers Wales was limiting learners' ability to plan their progression. Two staff took the initiative to strengthen the centre's information, advice and guidance resources and worked with Careers Wales to enable the centre to secure the Careers Wales Mark, which accredits the procedures to help learners plan their futures.

Centre staff have linked well with comprehensive school staff to develop their skills and teaching practices. However, there is not yet an embedded performance management system to enable managers to plan strategically for the development of the workforce.

The improved co-operation between the centre's education and care staff has led to the centre being able to call upon a small number of qualified teachers from the care staff to cover for occasional absence of teachers. These staff have the opportunity to attend in-house education training events. However, they do not teach regularly and are not managed by the education unit. The centre misses opportunities to use the partnership with CSCS to address shortages in teachers.

Education and care staff attend weekly meetings to review the progress of each learner. These meetings improve the joint working within the centre to ensure that learners make the best progress possible. However, staff do not update learners'

individual education plans to reflect these discussions. Staff have made good use of pupils' views to increase the range of subjects and opportunities.

Good partnership working enabled learners to work with an external agency to develop a stimulating walled garden, where they grow food.

The centre does not yet have a clear strategy and policy to help it respond to the difficult challenge of developing the basic skills of learners, many of whom have gaps in their skills.

### **Recommendation 2: Improve the collection and analysis of data in education to help improve outcomes for all learners**

**This recommendation has been partly addressed.**

The seconded CSCS manager worked well with local authority staff to evaluate existing management information systems, having identified shortcomings in a system that the centre had planned to purchase. He also developed useful spreadsheets that enable the centre to record learners' achievements and progress until they buy a new system. The centre has now identified an appropriate management information system, but is yet to finalise its purchase.

The centre records learners' reading and writing abilities clearly. Teaching staff use an online initial assessment tool to measure new learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Several care workers use this package to support learners to improve their literacy and numeracy through their homework. However, the centre has not developed the use of the software package to help learners set short-term improvement targets.

### **Recommendation 3: Raise teaching in all lessons to a good standard.**

**This recommendation has been largely addressed**

Teaching staff have useful opportunities to attend a range of training, including on how to support learners with dyslexia and on improving self-assessment. There are clear plans in place for further appropriate staff development opportunities.

Teachers took part in peer observations last year and these provided useful opportunities for staff to share best practice. However, managers have not formally observed teaching and learning recently. This means that staff do not have clear, personalised targets to help them to further develop their teaching practices.

In most of the lessons observed by inspectors, teaching has many strengths. All teachers have a very reliable and professional relationship with the learners. Teachers have a clear focus on literacy and numeracy in lessons and make effective

use of opportunities to develop learners' skills. In the best lessons, teachers engage the learners well in topics that stimulate their interest. This helps most learners to play an active role and focus well on tasks. Overall, teachers plan lessons well. They include a wide range of activities that meet the learning styles of most learners effectively. However, in a very few lessons the pace is too fast and the learning is too intensive to allow the learners enough time to reflect. This means that a few learners do not develop their thinking skills well enough or consolidate their learning effectively.

Behaviour in lessons is generally of a good standard and staff apply behaviour rules consistently. This helps most learners to improve their behaviour in lessons.

**Recommendation 4: Increase the availability of classroom-based learning support to ensure that all children's additional needs are met appropriately.**

**This recommendation has been largely addressed**

The number of learning support assistants has increased. There are currently four learning support assistants, including one higher level teaching assistant (HLTA). There is one vacancy. When they first arrive, learners meet with the HLTA, who assesses their support preferences and needs well. This allows the learning support team to plan effectively to meet the needs of each learner.

Overall, learning support staff work well alongside the teachers to provide specific, tailored support for individuals. Learning support staff and teachers liaise well to discuss the needs of learners and the effectiveness of support strategies. Care staff now play an effective role in actively supporting all classroom-based learning. However, there are too few opportunities for care staff to engage in education staff development events. This means that these staff miss opportunities to develop or accredit their skills in contributing to learner progress.

**Recommendation 5: Increase the use of ICT and other resources such as whiteboards to support learning.**

**This recommendation has been fully addressed.**

Teachers use the centre's interactive technology well to provide learners with stimulating visual resources. Learners enjoy the wide variety of video clips and animated displays. In the best lessons, teachers use the technology with confidence and encourage learners to engage with interactive facilities.

In most classes, learners use the in-class computers and tablet computers well to carry out activities such as research, retrieval and storage of cooking recipes and textile and jewellery design.

**Recommendation 6: To formalise the partnership with the local authority School Improvement Service to help support improvements to teaching and learning.**

**This recommendation has been fully addressed.**

A challenge adviser from the Regional School Improvement service continues to support the centre. Other findings that relate to this recommendation are included under Recommendation 1.

**Supplementary Recommendations**

We have made some supplementary recommendations in order to support your continued improvement of the education you provide for children and young people

In order that the centre continues to improve, leaders and managers should:

- strengthen the rigour of performance management to improve the individual development planning and targeting of training for all staff, including teaching assistants;
- review how care staff who work with learners on education activities can improve or gain recognition for their education support skills;
- further improve the use of the strategic alliance with CSCS to increase the centre's ability to respond to staffing challenges;
- develop a literacy and numeracy strategy that helps ensure that all learners have clear targets for improving their literacy and numeracy; and
- fully embed management information systems to inform strategic planning.

**What happens next?**

We will join CCSIW on their next baseline scheduled inspection, when we will undertake a full inspection against the Estyn's Common Inspection Framework. CCSIW will contact you to confirm the timing of this. In order that continuing progress can be made, it may be useful to you to have this written summary of HMI's findings.

*Yours sincerely*

*Jassa Scott*

**Jassa Scott**  
Assistant Director