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Dear Mark

Inspection of Hillside Secure Children's Centre

Alun Connick HMI and Gill Sims HMI visited your centre recently in order to inspect provision on behalf of CSSIW. CSSIW asked Estyn to evaluate the education provision offered at Hillside, and answer the three key questions in the Estyn Common Inspection Framework:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Context

Since Estyn's last visit in 2015, there have been further significant changes to the balance of the extremely vulnerable client group for which the centre caters. The needs of learners in Hillside vary considerably, according to the nature and source of their referral. Some learners are involved in the youth justice system, while others are referred for welfare reasons. Many will only be at the centre for a short period of time. This requires the centre to continually reassess and adapt the services it offers.

Main findings of the inspection visit

How good are outcomes?	Adequate
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Nearly all learners leave Hillside with a relevant and positive educational outcome. Nearly all achieve units of credit for their vocational learning in areas such as childcare, hair and beauty, and cookery. Most of these are at either entry level three or level one.

A minority of learners take GCSE examinations, many in English and mathematics. However, too many learners achieve GCSEs at low grades and outcomes in GCSE science are particularly poor.

Nearly all learners achieve a qualification in literacy and numeracy at entry level. However, very few attain relevant qualifications in literacy and numeracy at level one and level two and this restricts their progression to further education and training.

In nearly all vocational classes, learners make effective progress in developing new skills. They engage well with the lesson and generally remain on task. They enjoy these lessons and are motivated to achieve proficient outcomes.

In other classes, learner progress is variable. Although a majority of learners achieve the lesson objectives, a minority make slow progress. These learners do not engage well, show little motivation and do not focus on their tasks for parts of the lesson.

Overall, learners' individual literacy and numeracy skills are under-developed. Many learners do not build up their skills to achieve sustained progress over time. Around half of learners engage well in discussions and take appropriate turns in speaking. A few listen well to others and engage in animated conversations. Most communicate well with their teachers and a few of their peers.

A minority of learners write appropriately in line with their ability and use correct spelling for most of their work. Many learners use ICT confidently for research and to explore ideas for creative projects.

Nearly all learners arrive at classes on time. Behaviour is generally good and the number of learners returning to their rooms during lessons has reduced over time. A minority of learners develop useful skills in reflecting on and managing their own behaviour through initiatives such as 'talk time'. Many learners develop their social skills over time and learn how to interact appropriately with adults and peers. A few sustain this learning beyond the classroom.

Many learners enjoy opportunities to engage in entrepreneurial activities. They develop products for sale to staff and visitors to raise money for charities that they

select themselves. Through initiatives such as the production and sale of soap they practise a range of skills in subjects that include science, technology, art, design, literacy and numeracy.

Most learners demonstrate an appropriate understanding of how to maintain healthy lifestyles through classes such as cookery and science. Nearly all take part in a suitable range of sport and fitness activities through the curriculum. Learners participate very enthusiastically in the annual sports event, the Hillympics, and engage wholeheartedly in challenges that require them to use problem-solving and team-building skills.

How good is provision?	Good
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Learners have good access to education. The curriculum the centre offers is broad, offering learners a good range of vocational and educational options. In addition to the core subjects, learners can take subjects such as catering, motor vehicle maintenance, art and design. There are good opportunities for learners to gain accreditation, including GCSEs and unit-based accreditation. Programmes are flexible and respond reasonably well to the needs of most children. Hillside works well with its partner comprehensive school to extend the curriculum, for example to allow learners who, on their arrival, are already studying A-level psychology. The curriculum has recently been revised to include thematic topics, which enable learners to pursue individualised programmes of interest. However, this approach is not yet fully established.

Learning and accreditation takes good account of the low academic achievement of many of the centre's learners. For example, they gain credit for small units of learning. This encourages learners to progress and recognise their achievements. This is valuable, as many have had negative experiences in mainstream education, and many will only stay at the centre for a short period. Learners have good opportunities to gain qualifications that particular industries require (such as Food Hygiene Certificates or Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards). These improve learners' employment potential. In a few cases, learners do not have appropriate opportunities to progress to higher levels of qualification.

Nearly all staff are clear about the important priority that literacy and numeracy have in breaking cycles of reoffending behaviour. The centre has recently invested in a new system of initial and diagnostic assessment of these skills in order to help strengthen the planning of skills development. However, this is operating alongside other assessment methods already being used, which can confuse the identification of and planning for learners' needs. For many learners who make progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills beyond entry level, the jump to GCSE is too great and they do not perform well enough in the exams. Currently there is no clear literacy or numeracy strategy in the centre. Planning to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects is too variable. Teachers do not

consistently set and track smart skills targets for individual learners that reflect the findings from initial and diagnostic skills assessments.

In a minority of lessons, opportunities are missed to embed the development of literacy, numeracy and digital competence, or to contextualise these within learners' particular interest areas. It is planned that the thematic sections of the new timetable will accommodate this, but this is in the early stages of development.

Most teachers make references in lessons to the culture of Wales. A few make use of incidental Welsh. Most classrooms have displays with bilingual content and a few teachers use learning resources that are partly bilingual.

Nearly all teachers plan well to provide learners with a suitable range of learning activities. They design their lessons to engage learners in short tasks. They adapt their teaching well to meet the learners' diverse social and interpersonal needs. They strive to understand the needs and motivations of the learners to ensure they provide the most effective care and timely support. Most staff are good role models for the young people, reinforcing the behaviours they encourage learners to develop.

Teachers in vocational lessons plan very well to provide the maximum amount of interactive learning time. They use appropriate resources to make sure all learners have equal access to the learning. Most vocational teachers take care to include literacy, numeracy and ICT where opportunities naturally occur.

In other lessons, where learning is more desk-based, teachers use interactive technology and media well to provide variety and to maintain learner interest.

Many teachers plan well to provide extension work for learners who finish their work quickly. However, too few teachers adapt learning activities fully enough to meet the needs of individual learners, particularly those at lower levels of ability.

Overall teachers manage learners' behaviour appropriately. They use a wide range of strategies to re-engage learners who choose to remove themselves from activities and learning.

Most teachers use questioning well to engage reluctant learners and to develop learners' thinking skills. A few use thoughtful extension questions well to develop learners' skills in reasoning, inference and deduction.

All teachers make very effective use of appropriate praise and encouragement and recognise the achievements of all learners. However, the planning for assessment of, and for, learning is underdeveloped. Many lesson plans do not identify specific outcomes well enough to allow teachers to measure and assess learner progress easily.

Care workers and teachers work well together to widen learners' experiences. Over the summer staff work well together to enable learners to get involved in enrichment

activities, such as sugar craft. The annual sport activity enables learners to participate in team activities, where they develop good communication skills and build relationships with others.

The provision of care, support and guidance of learners is very good. A good range of programmes support well the health and wellbeing of the learners in the centre. They are taught how to cook healthy meals and they take part regularly in physical education. Learners take part in extra sports activities during evenings and weekends.

There are good arrangements with Careers Wales to give learners access to independent advice and guidance. Additionally, the centre has enhanced its support to learners in planning for their future through its employment of a resettlement officer. This officer assists in the planning of arrangements for learners who are due to leave and advocates on their behalf when dealing with key agencies.

The centre has strengthened its range and extent of therapy practitioners. For example, they have recently appointed a speech and language specialist to the education team. They have employed psychologists, who routinely assess learners' needs on entry and communicate these needs well to teaching staff. There is very good communication between teaching and care staff, and many of the teaching assistants also work as care workers, which improves communication amongst staff further.

There is a range of sessions on substance misuse, sex and relationships, offending behaviour, bullying and harassment. Teachers involve specialist or visiting staff in these topics. Currently however, there is no personal and social education (PSE) scheme of work in place, to ensure that these topics form a coherent programme and help prepare learners for leaving the centre. The centre does not evaluate the impact of PSE activities on learners' behaviours and coping strategies.

There is a clear safeguarding policy and guidelines in place and staff understand what to do if they have concerns about an individual. All staff receive training in safeguarding and appropriate staff are trained in control and restraint techniques. The policy for dealing with radicalisation is very new. While some staff have participated in training in this topic in the comprehensive school, there is not a coherent approach to training all staff in this aspect of safeguarding.

There is a clear and effective understanding of behaviour management, shared between teaching and care staff. They work well together to ensure that they challenge consistently the use of bad language. There is a very good multidisciplinary approach to managing learners' behaviour, which minimises the time that a few learners lose from education activities.

The learning accommodation is generally good. However, too many classrooms have levels of echo and reverberation that are distracting for many learners with

learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers use attractive wall displays to make most rooms stimulating and celebrate learners' work and achievements. There is good access to ICT in classrooms. Most teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage learners' interest in lessons. While a majority of classrooms are too small to allow teachers to develop activity-based learning that can harness many learners' high degrees of physical energy, there are classrooms that can be adapted for a range of vocational subjects. These are used well to develop learners' practical skills. Teachers pay good attention to security and to health and safety within these workshops.

How good are leadership and management?
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Good

The local authority has given good support to Hillside since the last inspection. At a strategic level, the local authority has enabled the centre to undertake a major review of the management of the education provision. It has provided a good level of challenge and support to the centre's forward planning to bring the education provision under the direct management of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School.

A board of directors, with a good range of expertise, oversees the strategic planning of the centre in the quarterly board meetings. They are well briefed and robustly monitor the centre's progress towards its strategic objectives. There are good opportunities for learners participate in board meetings and elected learners represent their colleagues' views to the board.

The headteacher of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School reviewed and restructured the staffing of the education centre, putting in place useful staff exchanges with the main school. This benefits both institutions, by enabling them to share specialist expertise. This very recently introduced new structure has clarified the responsibilities of teachers in Hillside, and improved the morale, enthusiasm and confidence of staff.

The centre manager and the headteacher work together effectively to make sure that care staff and education staff work together closely to provide seamless support for learners. There are regular multi-disciplinary meetings to keep all teachers and care staff up-to-date with learners' needs, behaviour and progress. This enables staff to continuously adapt provision and support to meet the needs of the current learners. Teachers review learners' performance and progress in fortnightly education meetings and use these meeting to set targets for learners. This is useful, but learners are not sufficiently involved in negotiating or agreeing targets.

The headteacher is able to bring additional or cover staff from the comprehensive school when needed. As a result, the centre ensures continuity of provision and responds well to unplanned staff absences.

Teachers receive helpful induction training to help them adapt from mainstream school teaching to the challenges of working in a secure setting.

The school performs well against the Youth Justice Board (YJB) education performance indicators. The range of information held about learners has improved. It is now sufficient to track the achievement of the small number of learners in the centre. However the management information system is not yet sophisticated enough to help in the strategic analysis of learners' performance, progress or progression, or to measure the impact of initiatives that staff introduce on learners' behaviour or achievement.

Quality improvement arrangements in the school have many good features.

The centre produces a self-evaluation report that is comprehensive and evaluative. It uses this analysis well to develop an annual quality development plan. The plan contains clear objectives for improvement and is monitored regularly to capture the progress made towards objectives. There has been good progress towards meeting the recommendations of the previous Estyn inspection.

The performance management system used by the comprehensive school is now in use in the centre. However, in too many cases the targets and development objectives set for staff are not detailed enough or customised enough to individuals' needs.

Hillside supports professional development well and many staff access appropriate training opportunities. Teachers have equal access to the full range of training opportunities within the comprehensive school. Staff have recently visited a secure children's home in England and other centres to look at good practice. There are useful arrangements in place for staff in the centre and in the comprehensive school to observe each other teaching.

New staff are offered helpful, clinical supervision by the centre's psychologists to help them settle into the new environment. However, there is not a detailed staff development plan that shows how the centre plans to ensure that staff with new responsibilities will be equipped to carry out their roles.

Hillside celebrates its links with a good range of partners, including the fire service and local football clubs, by displaying photographs of the learners who participate in these events. A few learners are able to gain work experience with local employers. Police and fire service staff participate in the centre's Hillympics, an annual sport event

The management of resources in the education centre is good. The enhanced staffing arrangements ensure that staffing ratios are good, with appropriate cover arrangements when needed. There are sufficient teaching assistants that provide valuable support to teachers and learners. Classes are well equipped, and learners have good access to ICT and facilities that enable them to develop a good range of vocational skills.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, Hillside should:

- R1 Implement training for all staff to ensure that all are sensitive to influences that can radicalise learners
- R2 Develop a literacy and numeracy strategy
- R3 Review the curriculum to further improve the relevance of qualifications to learners' success and progression, and improve the numbers of learners who gain literacy and numeracy qualifications at levels one and two
- R4 Develop a scheme of work for PSE and evaluate the impact of PSE activities on learners' behaviours and coping strategies to prepare them for leaving the centre
- R5 Improve the assessment of, and for, learning
- R6 Improve the strategic analysis of learners' performance, progress or progression, and the impact of initiatives introduced on learners' behaviour or achievement

Yours sincerely

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