



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

A report on

**Ruthin School
Mold Road
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1EE**

Date of inspection: February 2021

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ruthin School

Ruthin School is a co-educational boarding and day school catering for pupils from the age of 10 to 20 years. The school is situated on the outskirts of Ruthin, a small market town in the Vale of Clwyd, Denbighshire. The school is a charitable trust whose governing body is the Council of Management.

The Welsh Government formally requested Estyn to undertake an announced focused inspection of Ruthin School under section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The inspection had a particular focus. Firstly, to evaluate the school's progress in meeting the recommendations left following the unannounced focused visit in November 2019 and, secondly, to evaluate the school's capacity to meet standard 3 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, which relates to the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

Inspectors from Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited the school on 24th February 2021 and also carried out some inspection activities remotely. They considered evidence from a range of sources including:

- interviews with staff including the headmaster, deputy headmaster and designated safeguarding person
- interviews with members of the Council of Management, including the deputy chair and the trustee with specific responsibility for safeguarding
- scrutiny of documents including policies, training records, meeting notes, staff and pupil files
- teacher questionnaires
- interviews with trustees of the Council of Management
- interviews with staff
- discussions with pupils

Main findings

Overall, the school continues to fail to meet standard 3 of Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. The Council of Management is beginning to respond suitably to the recommendations of the previous focused visit. The newly appointed chair to the Council, with the support of the trustee with special responsibility for safeguarding, is committed to establishing the necessary and significant change in the safeguarding culture of the school and ensuring the highest possible code of conduct from all staff.

However, there remain a number of key and significant areas that require strengthening as a matter of urgency to enable the school to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. This judgement is supported by the following key evaluations:

- Managers and leaders have not prioritised the need to change the safeguarding culture of the school strongly enough to ensure that they develop a safe,

supportive environment across all areas of the school's work, where pupils are valued and treated with respect.

- When assessing risks, the Council of Management does not always evaluate the impact of staff behaviour on the wellbeing and safety of pupils.
- Processes to monitor and quality assure the effectiveness of arrangements for safeguarding pupils and to plan for improvement are at an early stage of development.
- There is too much variation in staff understanding of the school's procedures when sharing concerns about pupils or other staff, which results in delays in making appropriate referrals to social services.

Recommendations

- 1 The school should implement robust arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns to senior leaders and to the Council of Management. This includes ensuring that all staff understand their role and responsibilities regarding safeguarding and are clear about whom to refer to when they have concerns.
- 2 As part of the culture of safeguarding in the school, every member of staff should promote and model the highest levels of behaviour in all aspects of their work.
- 3 The school should secure stable leadership arrangements as a matter of urgency to ensure timely progress in building an appropriate safeguarding culture and to oversee safeguarding arrangements.
- 4 The school's recording of Council of Management meetings should include detailed safeguarding reports and should record members' acceptance or rejection or query of the detail in each safeguarding report, along with relevant actions arising. These reports should be routine on a regular basis and include an analysis of patterns of activity. Reports should pay particular regard to the use of sanctions, recording of incidents of physical restraint, exclusions and safeguarding referrals to the local authority social services or the police.

Strengths

- The school has taken relevant actions to achieve a more suitable balance between promoting both pupils' academic progress and pupils' wellbeing and social development. In addition, there is strengthened communication between the academic and pastoral sections of the school. The school has sought advice and guidance from experienced external specialists to develop suitable policies and processes that cover most relevant areas of the school's duty to safeguard children. These arrangements are beginning to impact positively on pupils' wellbeing and social development.
- Line management structures are clear, and responsibilities are delegated appropriately to enable specialist staff and those with specific roles to carry out their duties with the necessary degree of autonomy. The designated safeguarding person provides monthly safeguarding reports to the Council of Management. These reports keep trustees informed about key issues relating to the welfare of pupils and safeguarding matters.
- There is an emerging team approach to safeguarding with the recent appointment of a 'trustee with expertise and special interest in safeguarding' to

oversee the work of the designated safeguarding person and his deputy. The role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding person are set out clearly to ensure that the school responds appropriately to staff concerns about children's welfare or complaints about other staff. Specialist support and training has been recently identified to develop the appropriate level of expertise for these two key members of staff.

- The Council of Management has very recently established subcommittees to help oversee and give greater direction to the work of the school. The safeguarding subcommittee is planning to work more closely with outside agencies such as health bodies and children's services to respond to concerns, strengthen collaboration and address the recommendations of the previous inspection. However, this is at an early stage of development.
- Nearly all staff have received suitable child protection and safeguarding training at the appropriate level. School nurses now have access to regular supervision from a health professional. Most staff understand their duty and responsibility for reporting on safeguarding concerns and the majority of staff know to whom they should report any concerns. However, this level of knowledge is still inadequate.

Areas for development

- Across the school, there is too much variation in leaders' and staff's understanding as to whom they should report child safeguarding concerns. A minority of staff are not sufficiently clear about the child protection policy and process of referral, which results in delays in making appropriate referrals to social services. This is a substantial shortcoming.
- A minority of staff are uncertain of or lack confidence in the procedures set out in the Child Protection Policy for referring concerns about staff behaviour and attitudes to senior leaders.
- Although there is an emerging team approach to safeguarding, the gender balance in the safeguarding team does not reflect the co-educational character of the school. This may discourage pupils from approaching the team.
- Although the child protection policy covers most of the key issues required, a few areas of the policy are unclear. In addition, there is limited information on issues such as child sexual exploitation and modern slavery.
- Although there are suitable references to key statutory documents such as Keeping Learners Safe within the child protection policy, they do not refer to the most recent versions of these documents.
- Trustees do not yet make full use of the information in monthly safeguarding reports to help identify trends and key issues affecting the wellbeing of pupils. This prevents leaders from identifying relevant priorities and evaluating their impact.
- The number of changes of leadership over the last 12 months undermines the ability of the school to build confidence in the leadership team and in their bringing about of the changes needed to improve the safeguarding culture of the school.

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

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

3(2b) – Safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school which complies with 'Keeping Learners Safe: The role of local authorities and governing bodies under the Education Act 2002.

Standard 4: The suitability of proprietors and staff

On this visit, Estyn did not inspect standard 4.

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:

The school does not currently meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. To comply fully with these requirements, the school should address the issues identified above for each standard.

Inspectors' judgements on this limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 163 inspection.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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