



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

A report on

Ysgol Y Rhos

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Y Rhos

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Rhos
Proprietor status	Unique Care Homes Ltd., a private limited company
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	15
Pupils of statutory school age	15
Date of previous Estyn visit	04/12/2023
Start date of visit	13/11/2024

School context:

Ysgol y Rhos is located in the grounds of two former holiday lodges in a rural area between Wrexham and Mold. The proprietor, Unique Care Homes Ltd., is a private limited company, which runs five children's homes in Wrexham and Denbighshire.

The school is registered for 16 pupils aged 8 to 16 years with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many of the children have a history of placement breakdowns and exclusion from mainstream schools.

There are currently 15 pupils on the school roll and all pupils who attend the school are resident in the children's homes owned by the wider organisation. The majority of the children are placed by local authorities in Wales, including Ynys Môn, Conwy, Caerfyrddin and Gwynedd. A minority of children are placed by local authorities in England. Nearly all pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) or equivalent.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2023. They are supported by four full-time, permanent and qualified teachers. Staff from the company's children's home support the pupils in the school. In addition, the school works alongside two art psychotherapists who are based on the same site.

The school's last core inspection was in December 2023. At this inspection, the school did not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations. To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below for each standard:

Standard 1: The quality of education provided by the school

The school did not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the proprietor was required to:

- Ensure that personal, social, and health education i) reflects the independent school's aims and ethos, and ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act **[2(2)(d)]**
- Ensure that teaching staff demonstrate a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons, **[2(3)(d)]**
- Demonstrate that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and teaching staff use information from those assessments to plan teaching so that pupils can progress **[2(3)(g)]**
- Ensure that the independent school has a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference either to the independent school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both **[3]**

Standard 2: Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school did not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the proprietor was required to ensure that principles are actively promoted which:

- enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law,
- encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act,
- provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in Wales and the United Kingdom more widely,
- assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions **[4(c)]**

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school did not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard. In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the proprietor was required to:

- Ensure that (a) the welfare of pupils at the independent school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy that includes assessment of activities undertaken outside of the independent school's premises, and (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. **[8]**
- Promote good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that (a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up and effectively implemented that (i) encourages and rewards good behaviour, (ii) sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour, (iii) has regard to any relevant guidance issued

by the Welsh Ministers, and (b) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour. **[11]**

- Ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations made under section 434 of the 1996 Act(1). **[17]**

Following this visit, the school were asked to produce a post-inspection action plan. A team of HMI visited the school in March and June 2024 to discuss the school's progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in November 2024 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previously non-compliant standards.

Main findings

Since the core inspection, leaders and teachers have worked tirelessly to strengthen the work of the school. Staff have a strong sense of purpose and work together very well to promote pupils' education and well-being.

Teachers and pupil relationships are respectful and constructive. Pupils respond well to the caring and committed approach of staff. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together well to create supportive learning environments. Over time, the strong working relationships between pupils and staff help to improve pupils' confidence and well-being. In lessons, many pupils are well motivated and engage well in learning.

Staff from the linked residential children's home provide additional support in school for pupils' social and emotional needs. However, their involvement in supporting pupils' learning and skills development in the classroom is at an early stage of development. Further, professional learning for support staff to understand their role in supporting learning and individual pupils' learning needs is underdeveloped.

Staff provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills through a wide range of educational activities, including outdoor education. Pupils have made valuable visits to public institutions such as libraries, museums and fire stations. In addition, the school now benefits from the regular support of a community police officer who delivers useful sessions as part of the assembly programme, for example understanding racism and the importance of inclusivity and tolerance. Further educational visits to support the school's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural curriculum are in the early stages of development.

The school has strengthened its arrangements for the assessment and tracking of pupil progress as part of their new assessment framework. This has clarified the school's approach to assessment and has improved the school's understanding of the progress pupils make over their time at the school.

Teachers have a sound understanding of what pupils need to learn in terms of their primary needs and future goals and use this information appropriately to inform planning. Pupils work with teachers to produce valuable personal learning plans. However, quality assurance processes to ensure targets are appropriate and sufficiently challenging are underdeveloped.

The school monitors pupils' progress in relation to their attendance and behaviour well. Leaders regularly analyse data to check for patterns of behaviour and share this information with the wider team to support them to plan appropriate strategies for improvements. This is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and has led to a notable reduction in the incidents of poor behaviour at the school.

Members of staff have clear responsibilities and undertake their roles effectively. However, the distribution of teaching commitments along with other specific areas of responsibility, has a negative impact on a few staff and limits the sustainability of school improvements.

Compliance with the standards 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

This standard was not considered on this visit.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

This standard was not considered on this visit.

The provision of information

This standard was not considered on this visit.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

This standard was not considered on this visit.

Recommendation regarding continued registration

No follow-up required.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

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 (Wales) Regulations 2024. 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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