Estyn | Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

A report on

Ysgol Y Rhos

Date of inspection: September 2026

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
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	14
Pupils of statutory school age	14
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	{PreviousInspectionDate}
Start date of inspection	16/09/2026

School context

Ysgol y Rhos is situated in a rural area between Wrexham and Mold, within a small educational campus comprising several purpose-adapted buildings set in spacious grounds. The proprietor, Unique Care Homes Ltd., is a private limited company that also operates five children's homes across Wrexham and Denbighshire.

The school is registered for up to 24 pupils aged 8 to 16 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have experienced disruption to their education, including placement breakdowns and periods of exclusion from mainstream settings.

There are currently 14 pupils on the school roll. The majority of the children are placed by local authorities in Wales, including Ynys Môn, Caerfyrddin, Swansea and Gwynedd. A minority of children are placed by local authorities in England. All pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) or equivalent.

The headteacher has been in post since October 2025. They are supported by four full-time, permanent and qualified teachers, three teaching assistants and a pastoral lead.

Previous recommendations

R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003

R2 Ensure that assessment, behaviour and attendance information is used systematically to provide a clear picture of the progress pupils make over time

R3 Improve procedures for quality assurance and improvement planning to focus on pupil progress and the standards they achieve

R4 Strengthen the provision for personal and social education, relationships and sex education and careers

Summary

Ysgol y Rhos provides a calm and supportive environment. Staff know pupils well and use their understanding of pupils' individual needs and experiences to support their learning. Positive relationships help pupils to feel secure and, in many cases, to re-engage successfully with education.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made important improvements. Leaders now use information about pupils' progress more effectively and have strengthened arrangements for assessment, planning and quality assurance. The curriculum has also been developed further, including provision for personal and social education, relationships and sexuality education and careers.

Pupils generally respond well to teaching. Staff use praise and questioning effectively and most lessons are planned suitably to meet pupils' needs. Many pupils show positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistent enough across the school. In a few lessons, activities are not matched closely enough to pupils' needs and abilities and do not always build securely on what pupils already know and can do.

Reading is promoted particularly well in English lessons, where pupils benefit from strong modelling and opportunities to develop vocabulary and comprehension. Across the school, leaders and staff maintain a suitable focus on literacy. However, approaches to developing reading skills more widely are not yet fully embedded and the school's wider culture of reading is still developing.

The school has sound safeguarding policies and procedures, including clear arrangements for recording and following up concerns. Leaders respond promptly should concerns arise, and staff benefit from a broad range of safeguarding training.

Attendance has improved over time and pupils benefit from a broad range of enrichment, community and independence-building opportunities. The proprietors continue to invest in the school and have improved the environment to better support pupils' learning and well-being.

Main evaluation

Ysgol y Rhos provides a calm and supportive environment where positive relationships between staff and pupils are central to its work. Staff know pupils well and understand the individual circumstances, needs and experiences that can affect their engagement with learning. They use this knowledge sensitively to help pupils feel secure, develop confidence and take part in school life successfully.

Progress since the last inspection

Since the last core inspection, during which the school was found not to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the school has successfully completed a period of follow-up and made significant improvements.

The current leadership team has continued to build on this work. Leaders now use a wider range of information more systematically to understand pupils' progress. Assessment and tracking systems place a clearer emphasis on progress over time, while quality assurance and improvement planning focus increasingly on pupils' standards and progress. Leaders have also improved systems for sharing information about pupils' needs, enabling staff to plan more effectively and provide more consistent support. They have continued to develop the curriculum, including provision for personal and social education, relationships and sexuality education and careers. These developments are increasingly influencing provision and classroom practice, although some newer systems are not yet sufficiently established to demonstrate their impact.

Teaching and learning

Nearly all staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' learning needs and interests. As a result, pupils engage well and demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. Many show pride in their work and are keen to share their achievements.

Staff use praise effectively to encourage pupils, reinforce expectations and support them to persevere when they find learning difficult. Nearly all teachers and support staff use questioning well to help pupils recall prior learning and develop their understanding.

Most teachers plan effectively to meet pupils' learning needs, and during their time at the school, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Most learning activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and provide suitable opportunities to develop literacy, thinking and creative skills. However, in a very few lessons teachers do not focus sufficiently on securing pupils' basic knowledge and understanding before moving on to more demanding work. As a result, on occasion pupils may learn how to complete a task without understanding the underlying concepts or reasons for what they are doing. In addition, in a few lessons an over-reliance on worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to develop their skills independently.

The school provides a wide range of off-site learning and enrichment activities that broaden pupils' experiences appropriately. Older pupils have opportunities to develop leadership and independence through the Duke of Edinburgh Award and volunteering in the local community.

Focus on reading

Teaching promotes reading effectively as a process of making meaning. Within English lessons, teaching integrates speaking, listening, reading and writing skilfully through well-planned, multi-sensory learning experiences. Highly effective modelling of expressive reading helps pupils interpret language and meaning with increasing confidence. As a result, pupils develop their vocabulary, comprehension and understanding of figurative language well and use these features successfully in their own writing.

Across the school more widely, leaders and staff maintain a suitable focus on literacy. However, this currently places greater emphasis on broader literacy development than on the explicit teaching of reading skills. The school has begun to strengthen the school's reading provision through a reading-for-pleasure initiative. The library is well stocked with an appropriate range of engaging, age-appropriate texts and staff are in the process of gathering pupils' views on the books they would like to read. These developments are beginning to strengthen the wider culture of reading.

Well-being and safeguarding

The school has sound safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including clear arrangements for recording and following up concerns. Staff raise concerns appropriately and leaders respond promptly, including through liaison with external agencies where necessary, to help keep pupils safe. Staff benefit from a broad range of safeguarding training, including training linked to child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and child criminal exploitation. Leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities well and implement safeguarding procedures appropriately.

The school promotes positive behaviour effectively. Staff have clear expectations of pupils. They use consistent routines, positive relationships and individualised approaches to help pupils regulate their behaviour and engage with learning. Positive behaviour considerably outweighs negative incidents, with pupils increasingly demonstrating qualities such as independence, resilience and engagement. Leaders analyse behaviour information carefully to identify patterns and provide targeted support where needed.

Over the past few years, attendance at Ysgol y Rhos has improved steadily. Although a few pupils do not attend regularly enough, unauthorised absence is very low. For many pupils, improved attendance represents significant progress from their starting points following considerable disruption to their education before joining the school. Leaders understand the complex circumstances that can affect attendance and respond sensitively.

Leadership

Leaders use quality assurance activities increasingly well to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to follow these through with appropriate actions. This has contributed to improvements in assessment, modelling and pupils' independence. However, the impact of some newer approaches is not yet consistent across all subjects.

The proprietors demonstrate a strong commitment to the school, take considerable pride in its continued development and are ambitious for its future. They have invested purposefully in improving the school environment to better meet pupils' learning and well-being needs. The premises are well maintained and provide a suitable range of spaces, including additional communal areas, separate primary provision and secure outdoor areas. These developments help pupils to come together more regularly and enable the school to respond effectively to pupils' differing needs. The proprietors provide supportive oversight and maintain a clear focus on securing the best possible provision for pupils.

Compliance with the regulations 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

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The provision of information

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

New recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

R1 Improve the consistency of teaching so that learning builds effectively on pupils' prior learning and meets their needs

R2 Embed a whole-school approach to developing pupils' reading skills and fostering a culture of reading

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. *'most pupils…'* or *'very few pupils…'*. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:
http://www.estyn.gov.wales/

This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).

© Crown Copyright 2026: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 18/11/2026