



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

**A report on**

**Rydal Penrhos**

**Date of inspection: December 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Rydal Penrhos

Name of provider	Rydal Penrhos
Proprietor status	Registered charity
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent all age
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	298
Pupils of statutory school age	242
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	03/12/2024

### School context:

Rydal Penrhos is an independent day school for boys and girls from the age of 2 to 18 years. The school is situated in the town of Colwyn Bay in North Wales. The school operates as a charitable trust, established by the Methodist Church, and is an associate school in the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.

There are currently 298 pupils on roll. These include 30 in the nursery, 113 in the preparatory school and 184 in the senior school, of whom 55 are in the sixth form.

During the pandemic the number of boarding pupils decreased to the point where it was unsustainable. There are currently no boarding pupils on roll. However, the school wish to retain the option to re-admit boarding pupils at a date in the future.

The school is non-selective and new pupils may join the school at any stage.

A very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Nearly all pupils speak English fluently and a very few speak Welsh as a first language at home. The school offers additional learning provision to a very few pupils.

The current principal was appointed in September 2023.

## Summary

The principal and vice principals at Rydal Penrhos have successfully revitalised the school's vision and purpose in the short time since their appointments. Their leadership has led to significant organisational changes, such as consolidating the school onto a single site and implementing a more streamlined leadership model. These changes have fostered a collaborative environment with a shared focus on continuous improvement.

Pupils at the school benefit from a strong sense of community, respect, and support, thanks to their positive and trusting relationships with staff. The house system and charity events, such as the Christmas fayre, are integral parts of school life, promoting a clear sense of belonging. The school balances the strong promotion of Christian faith with an inclusive approach to other beliefs.

Leadership roles are widely distributed among pupils, many of whom participate in committees and feel their voices are heard and valued. This sense of ownership contributes to a positive attitude towards learning, where strong teacher-pupil relationships create calm, purposeful classrooms. A majority of lessons are well-structured, maintaining high energy and presenting the right level of challenge to pupils.

Teachers at Rydal Penrhos consistently develop pupils' oracy skills through effective open questioning. GCSE and A-Level teachers, with their subject expertise, instil confidence and clarity in pupils about what they need to learn. New systems for target setting and progress monitoring help pupils track their development and the effective use of assessment information enables teachers to adjust their teaching methods and provide tailored support.

## **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**

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**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The provision of information**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

## **Recommendations**

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

R1 Continue to implement and embed the school's current improvement priorities

## **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.

## **Main evaluation**

In the relatively short period of time since their appointment, the principal and vice principals have refreshed the school's vision and renewed its purpose. They have overseen significant organisational change, including the relocation of the school to a single site and the installation of a more streamlined leadership model. Leaders at all levels, through effective communication and clearly distributed responsibilities, work collaboratively and with a shared focus on continuous improvement. As a result, staff throughout the school have clear sense of the school's operation and strategic ambitions.

Pupils at Rydal Penrhos have a strong sense of community. They feel respected, cared for, and know that staff understand and support them. The house system is a central feature of the school. Pupils are proud of their involvement and enjoy participating in a wide range of competitions. Charity events are also an intrinsic part of the school calendar. For example, the Christmas fayre in support of Tŷ Gobaith, a charity which supports terminally ill children. Christian faith is a highly visible cornerstone of school life. This sits alongside an inclusive atmosphere which encourages understanding and valuing of wider faiths and beliefs. This is a strong characteristic of the community.

Many pupils across the school hold leadership posts and are members of committees which drive aspects of school life, such as the school council and eco-committee. Pupil leaders take pride in these roles and understand the responsibilities that underpin them. As a result, at all levels across the school, pupils feel the school listens to them and acts upon their suggestions, when appropriate.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils demonstrate strong positive attitudes towards their learning. They share their experiences and discuss their learning with clarity and insight. There is an assuredness within nearly all pupils that their effort is valued ahead of achievement. They understand that sustained effort, coupled with effective support from their teachers, is the best path towards progress.

As a result of strong, effective working relationships between teachers and pupils, nearly all classrooms are calm, purposeful learning environments. Pupils display high levels of trust in their teachers and approach their learning with enthusiasm and commitment.

Many lessons and sequences of lessons are carefully and purposefully planned and structured to enable pupils to make progress with their learning. In a majority of lessons, the pace of activity is kept high. As a result of well-designed activities, including adapted resources and tasks, nearly all pupils encounter an appropriate level of challenge.

As a result of nearly all teachers' open, probing questioning, pupils throughout the school make rapid progress in developing their oracy skills. They are adept at developing their knowledge and understanding through discussion, using active listening and displaying empathy when working collaboratively. As a result of the high standards insisted on by many teachers, a majority of pupils throughout the school make effective use of correct technical vocabulary when describing their learning.

Nearly all GCSE and A level subject teachers have a highly effective understanding of the requirements and demands of these courses. As a result, pupils in their

classes display a confidence and a sense of security in their learning, with a clear understanding of what they need to learn and accomplish.

As a result of newly established systems of target setting, tracking and monitoring put in place by senior leaders, nearly all pupils have a secure understanding of their overall progress and academic performance. Allied to teachers' close monitoring of pupil progress in real time, this results in many pupils making a strong level of progress.

The school makes effective use of assessment information to inform teaching. On a class level. For example, teachers follow assessed pieces of extended writing with lessons which focus on individual pupil's improvement targets. On an individual level, monitoring systems are effective in identifying pupils making less than expected progress, for whom support and intervention strategies are then put in place.

## **Progress in addressing recommendations from previous inspection**

### **R1 Strengthen leadership at all levels across the school**

Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to the leadership and governance structures at the school. The new principal conducted a leadership review that resulted in the restructuring and streamlining of the school leadership team. Two vice principals now oversee the pastoral and academic work of the school. Concurrently, the governing body reviewed its structure and operation, renewing its purpose and ability to act as a critical friend to school leaders.

The principal and vice principals are an effective, close-knit team. The principal shares information openly and involves the vice principals in all decision making. Together, they have successfully managed significant organisation changes resulting in an improved learning environment for pupils, raised staff morale and trust, and a strengthening of the school's sense of community.

Middle leaders, for example heads of faculties, phase leaders and heads of year, have been empowered by the new senior leadership team (SLT). Roles and responsibilities are distributed suitably and the SLT affords middle leaders a balance of autonomy, support and challenge. As a result, middle leaders are enthusiastic in developing and implementing new ideas to adapt and improve the school's provision.

Leaders at all levels work collegiately with a common purpose using shared and consistent language. Consequently, leadership at the school is more self-reflective, collaborative and cohesive, and staff are invested in improving provision and pupil outcomes.

### **R2 Strengthen improvement planning processes**

Recently, particularly since the appointment of the new principal in September 2023, self-evaluation and improvement planning processes have been strengthened. There is now a clear link between quality assurance activities, pupil outcomes and destinations, professional development of staff and the formation of improvement priorities.

Evidence gathered by leaders to underpin their self-evaluations is robust. For example, the principal, vice principals, and heads of faculty undertake a cycle of lesson observations and learning walks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. These activities have a clear focus, such as the impact of teacher feedback, and records are suitably detailed to support ongoing professional dialogue. However, these lesson observations do not link teaching and pupils' progress.

Leaders, through the reorganisation of the school on to a single site and the formation of 'faculties' and 'phases' within the school, have increased the opportunities for staff to collaborate and challenge one another. Furthermore, through an ongoing 'talent enhancement' programme, staff are developed and supported to work towards bespoke targets. These, along with a more streamlined and effectively distributed leadership model, have resulted in a helpful focus on continuous improvement and innovation. Middle leaders and teachers feel empowered to suggest, implement and drive improvements.

### **R3 Ensure that teaching challenges and supports all pupils consistently**

The school has made rapid progress towards meeting this recommendation.

In their short time in post, senior leaders have focused teaching and learning improvement work on the planning, teaching, assessment and feedback cycle.

Consistent approaches to curriculum planning have been effective in ensuring that, in nearly all areas of the school, programmes of study are appropriately planned for progressive development of pupils' knowledge and subject-specific skills.

The newly established target-setting, tracking, monitoring and reporting system in the senior school is highly effective in ensuring that teachers have a detailed understanding of the progress being made by each pupil, together with their pastoral context. This leads to appropriate support being provided to pupils where needed through adapted classroom practice or personalised intervention. The ALNCo and their team have been instrumental in the provision of a wide range of support to pupils.

Subject-level assessment and feedback practice are effective in ensuring that the majority of pupils are making rapid progress through appropriate levels of challenge and support.

### **R4 Improve the quality of teachers' feedback so that pupils understand where and how they can improve their work**

In September 2024 the school introduced a new marking and feedback policy. All staff contributed towards its development. This policy is at a very early stage of implementation and its impact upon pupil progress cannot yet be evaluated. At present, approaches observed are variable. However, staff have a consistent understanding of their approaches to feedback, which are appropriate to the activity and carefully considered. As a result, nearly all pupils understand the areas in which they need to improve.

## 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:

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