



Ruthin Boarding School



Ruthin School, Mold Road, Ruthin, LL15 1EE



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www.ruthinschool.co.uk

Date of inspection visits: 18 & 19 November 2025.

Service Information:

Operated by: Ruthin School.

Care Type: Boarding School.

Registered places: 65.

Main language: English.

Promotion of Welsh language and culture: This is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify, or meet the Welsh language needs of young people who use, or intend to use their service.

Summary:

Ruthin School is an independent co-educational boarding and day school for children aged 11 to 18 years. Since the previous inspection in June 2022, the school has experienced significant leadership changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher and senior leadership team. A newly constituted Local Advisory Board of Management has been established; however, this governance arrangement is not yet fully embedded to provide robust accountability.

At the time of inspection, 104 children were boarding. Boarding arrangements meet the required standards and promote children's well-being, care, and support, and provide a safe and suitable environment. Leadership and management demonstrate a commitment to improvement, although further work is required to ensure governance arrangements are fully effective.

This inspection considered progress against the recommendations from the 2022 report, the effectiveness of the boarding provision, and the robustness of current safeguarding systems and procedures. We found that all previous recommendations have been addressed and confirmed that children are safe, happy, and well cared for.

Findings:



Well-being

Children experience a high standard of well-being within the boarding provision. They are actively involved in making decisions about their care and environment, including personalising their bedrooms and contributing to communal area decoration. Regular boarding meetings ensure their voices are heard and acted upon. Feedback from children evidence they feel valued and included, children told us *"I am listened to by boarding staff,"* and *"I am involved in making decisions about my care,"* and *"I can share my views and ideas confidently with boarding staff."* This reflects a strong culture of participation and respect for children's voices and rights.

Children are encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices and benefit from excellent on-site health care and support. They have opportunities to engage in a variety of household, social, and leisure activities, either independently or with peers. Children receive prompt medical attention and are cared for by a dedicated team of registered nurses who are committed to their role. Feedback from children was highly positive, describing the health provision and nursing staff as *"Really caring and attentive"* and *"When we are poorly, we get seen quickly."* This demonstrates a strong focus on promoting children's health and well-being and ensuring timely access to health services.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Concerns are recorded appropriately, and referrals are submitted to the local safeguarding authority without delay. Safeguarding concerns are responded to in a timely manner, and children told us they know how to raise a concern and with whom. Clear information is displayed in boarding accommodation and within the school, including a picture of both academic and boarding staff responsible for safeguarding. Children told us, *"I feel safe at Ruthin school"* and *"There are so many boarding staff around to speak to should I feel anxious or worried"* and *"I feel safe here."* Enhanced recruitment checks are completed to ensure boarding staff are suitable to work with children.

Boarding accommodation provides a safe and comfortable environment that supports children to achieve good well-being. Overall, accommodation are clean, well maintained, and suitably furnished. We observed that children have access to personal space and privacy, with bedrooms containing items of personal importance to them. Children who board are typically from overseas, and effort is made to celebrate their cultural heritage. Boarding staff arrange events to celebrate children's cultural identity, encouraging inclusion and a sense of belonging. However, Ruthin school does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify, or meet the Welsh language needs of children who use, or intend to use their service.



Care & Support

There is a clear admission process that considers compatibility, education, physical health, and emotional well-being to ensure children's needs can be met. A wide range of views and information is reviewed prior to accepting a child to board at Ruthin school to support personal outcomes and ensure suitability. Children have an individual well-being plan and also a health care plan in place; however, the school may wish to consider consolidating these into a single document for consistency and ease of reference. Additionally, the school may wish to consider consolidating weekly meetings between the school nurses and boarding staff to ensure timely identification of concerns and referrals to health and social care services.

The boarding environment provides differing experiences but generally promotes a strong sense of belonging for children. Many children spoke positively about their experience, telling us, *"It's pretty good and fun living with children the same age"* and *"It's great getting to know other children from other countries and learn about their lives,"* reflecting their overall satisfaction with boarding life. They have opportunities to share their views through surveys, maintain regular and private contact with parents or guardians, and access a pupil handbook. Overseas boarders benefit from education guardians registered with an accredited organisation and regulatory body, ensuring appropriate oversight and support.

Children told us having their teacher as a house parent has been a positive experience, saying, *"Its continuity of education and care, and I have got to know them better as a person,"* and *"They listen to us and make sure we're happy and safe."* Boarding arrangements support healthy lifestyles, with varied and nutritious meal choices available and kitchen staff are aware of food allergies.

Children have access to appropriate advice and support to promote their physical health and emotional well-being. Nursing staff have well-established links with local health services to ensure children can access additional support when needed. Some children are supported to manage their own medication, with assistance available as required. Detailed records of children's health needs are maintained, regularly reviewed, and audited to ensure accuracy. Counselling services are available, alongside an independent listener, also member of the school staff speaks several languages, enabling children from overseas to express themselves in their preferred language and ensuring inclusive support.

Safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures are effective, and children's safety and well-being is a clear priority for boarding staff. Designated Safeguarding Practitioners (DSPs) understand their roles and responsibilities, and both boarding and academic staff complete safeguarding training, with DSPs receiving additional role-specific training. Reporting processes are clearly defined, and records of safeguarding concerns are maintained on an electronic system. However, the school may wish to consider implementing a centralised system for recording concerns across each accommodation with role-based permissions to further strengthen safeguarding consistency and arrangements.



Environment

Ruthin school is situated within extensive grounds in a large town in North Wales, providing easy access to public transport, health services, shopping amenities, and recreational facilities. Children report positive experiences within the boarding environment, highlighting strong relationships and a sense of community. The boarding accommodation have electronic entry systems and boarding staff are conveniently located and available at all times, to meet and greet children as they come and go. There is a roll call every evening to confirm children are accounted for.

A majority of children are located in accommodation that is suitable and supports them to maximise independence and achieve a sense of well-being. Boarding accommodation is divided into separate accommodation, each overseen by a house parent. Accommodation offer ample space for children to have their own living accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion, promoting safety and privacy. Bedrooms are clean, comfortable, and provide space for study. Each boarding house includes communal areas where children can spend time together or privately, and we observed personal touches such as fairy lights and photographs, creating a homely atmosphere. Children told us they feel happy in their accommodation, describing it as “*Like a big family home.*” However, some children residing in Gladstone accommodation expressed dissatisfaction with hygiene arrangements and privacy, highlighting an area for improvement.

Children have access to the school canteen throughout the day and are also able to prepare simple meals and snacks within the boarding accommodation. Healthy eating is actively promoted, with a variety of nutritious meals offered and dietary requirements, including vegan and vegetarian options, appropriately catered for.

Delays in addressing maintenance issues can negatively impact the quality of care and overall experience for children. To strengthen practice, the school should implement a clear reporting and escalation process that includes defined timelines for resolution, clear accountability, and a named individual responsible for monitoring progress. Additionally, recommendations made by the fire service must be actioned promptly to ensure ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements and to maintain a safe environment for children and boarding staff.

Boarding staff work collaboratively to support and monitor children’s needs and behaviours, ensuring individualised care and timely interventions where required. Boarding accommodation are arranged by gender and age, creating a supportive environment that helps children settle and thrive. Children are supervised throughout the day by academic staff, some of whom reside in the boarding accommodation and take responsibility for specific accommodation overnight. During the evening and night, boarding staff provide supervision and academic support, promoting continuity of care and a safe, structured environment. The school has introduced a lockdown system to enhance safety; in the event of an incident, doors automatically lock to prevent unauthorised access to classrooms and accommodation.



Leadership & Management

Leadership and management of the boarding provision are strong and demonstrate ambition for continuous improvement. The management and staffing structure is clearly defined, with delegated responsibilities. Since the previous inspection in 2022, significant changes to the leadership structure have strengthened oversight, with boarding overseen by a member of the senior leadership team. Leaders articulate a clear vision for the boarding experience, underpinned by high expectations and a culture of mutual respect. The safeguarding team ensures children are protected and their well-being outcomes promoted.

The Local Advisory Board of Management and those with responsibility for the school are newly constituted and have not yet embedded effective oversight and quality assurance arrangements. While members possess the skills, experience, and knowledge appropriate to their roles, the board should consider providing more robust scrutiny of the residential provision, ensuring regular policy review, and implementing effective monitoring processes of safeguarding and welfare. Leaders within the school demonstrate a commitment to improvement and are working to strengthen governance by providing data analysis to inform decision-making and drive sustained improvement.

Leaders across the school and boarding provision have strengthened and embedded robust systems for recording, reporting, and responding to safeguarding concerns. Designated Safeguarding Practitioners (DSPs) adopt a shared approach to managing risk, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. The team act promptly to escalate matters to appropriate external professionals and agencies, ensuring children's safety and well-being remain the primary focus. Boarding staff benefit from safeguarding training and tailored development opportunities that reflect the needs of children. Learning and reflection from these processes inform boarding staff training and enable and empower children to raise concerns.

Processes are in place for the safe selection and vetting of boarding staff at Ruthin school. We reviewed a sample of boarding staff files and found they met the necessary standards. The recruitment process ensures the safe appointment of boarding staff, including ancillary staff. There are enhanced recruitment checks in place, employment references verified, and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates were current. While supervision and appraisal systems are not yet consistently embedded, leaders recognise this as a priority and are taking steps to implement structured processes to support reflective practice and professional growth.

Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

CIW has no areas for improvement identified following this inspection.

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

National Minimum Standards

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

Standard	Recommendation(s)
	No NMS Recommendations were identified at this inspection

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