

Independent mainstream

Schools Data

35

No. of schools in 2025

Independent School Standards

In independent schools, we inspect the extent to which the school complies with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

No. of schools inspected that did not fully comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

2024-2025: 5

Inspection activity

No. of core inspections: 7

No. of monitoring inspections: 6

No. of material changes: 7

No. of follow-up to registration visits: 1

Spotlights

No. of spotlights: 5

Christ College – House System & Futures Programme
Myddelton College – Learning through the outdoors
OneSchool Global Newton Campus – Learning to learn
Ruthin School – Planning effective learning opportunities to prepare pupils for adult life

Summary

Since September 2024, each registered school receives at least one core and one monitoring inspection during the six-year cycle. Both types of inspections evaluate the school’s compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. Core inspections also evaluate the school against the common inspection framework, whilst monitoring inspections evaluate the school’s progress against the recommendations of the previous visit.

Nearly all schools inspected fostered enthusiastic, respectful learning environments where pupils thrived. Strong staff-pupil relationships encouraged safe classroom discussions and intellectual risk-taking. Teachers demonstrated robust subject expertise, with one school delivering teaching of exceptional depth and intellectual challenge. In primary settings, teaching in core skills was consistently strong, with half integrating these across the curriculum successfully. Most schools supported pupil independence and problem-solving, but, in a minority, overly teacher-led approaches limited engagement. Assessment use was inconsistent in a few schools.

Pupil well-being was a strength in nearly all schools, supported by inclusive environments and staff whom pupils trusted and valued. Most schools used digital tools well to support their safeguarding work. Career guidance was strong in a few schools and effective elsewhere. Pupil voice had genuine influence in many schools, and attendance was high in most.

Leadership was effective in most schools, driven by clear visions and strong operational management. Governance supported improvement in many, although a few schools lacked clarity and coherence in strategic direction. Professional development aligned with priorities in most schools but lacked coherence in one. Self-evaluation required improvement in a minority. Five schools did not meet Independent School Standards, mainly due to lapses in safer recruitment or site safety.

Teaching and learning

In nearly all schools, pupils were thriving in environments that fostered enthusiasm and engagement in learning. Nearly all pupils felt well supported by staff, who not only encouraged them to do their best, but also cultivated a culture of high expectations and mutual respect. As a result, nearly all pupils exhibited exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes towards their learning.

The respectful and trusting relationships established by staff in nearly all schools inspected this year helped to create classrooms where most pupils felt safe to contribute ideas, ask questions, and take intellectual risks without fear of judgement. In these schools, pupils benefited from staff who demonstrated strong subject expertise and a clear understanding of the requirements of public examinations. In a very few schools inspected this year, this expertise was exceptional and enabled pupils to engage confidently with advanced and challenging academic content.

High aspirations for pupils were common across most schools. In many schools, pupils demonstrated a notable ability to manage their own learning. This strength was developed through well-designed learning models and thoughtful teacher approaches that promoted problem-solving and independence.

In most schools with primary settings, the teaching of foundational skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics was of consistently high quality. Around half of the primary settings inspected went even further, empowering pupils to apply these essential skills confidently across the wider curriculum.

Two of the schools inspected this year admitted pupils with individual development plans (IDPs) or education health care plans (ECHPs). In these schools, pupils with additional learning needs had their needs and interests met effectively.

Teachers' verbal feedback, tailored questioning, and personalised support helped most pupils to make sound progress during lessons in many schools. However, in a minority of schools, lessons were overly

teacher-led, limiting opportunities for discussion, independent thought, and higher-order thinking. In these schools, there were also inconsistencies in how learning was adapted to meet the diverse needs of pupils, particularly the more able. In a few schools, the inconsistent or ineffective gathering and use of assessment information hindered teachers' ability to accurately measure pupil progress.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

In nearly all schools, pupils benefited from a nurturing and inclusive environment that promoted both emotional well-being and academic growth. This strong pastoral foundation helped to cultivate a sense of safety and belonging among pupils, nearly all of whom took pride in their school communities. Nearly all pupils consistently demonstrated respect towards one another, staff and visitors, reflecting the schools' positive values and culture.

The importance placed on pupil well-being was evident in nearly all schools where strong and effective pastoral systems were well-embedded. Staff were trusted adults whom pupils felt comfortable approaching if they were worried or upset. The majority of the schools inspected this year used digital platforms imaginatively to provide accessible channels for pupils to seek support or report concerns, strengthening the safeguarding culture.

In a few schools inspected, there was particularly high-quality guidance that enabled pupils to make well-informed decisions about their future education and careers. In all other schools, careers advice was at least appropriate and effective. However, in a very few schools, formal personal and social education was limited and preparation for adult life was underdeveloped.

Pupil leadership roles and structured approaches to pupil voice were well developed in many schools inspected this year. These opportunities were meaningful and purposeful, giving pupils agency and having a tangible, positive influence on the life and work of the school.

Attendance of pupils was a strength in many schools inspected this year, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school and their commitment to learning.

Leading and improving

During core inspections, most leaders drove a clear and ambitious vision that prioritised pupil success and set high expectations for staff. Through their commitment, leaders in these schools created and maintained cohesive communities where collaboration thrived, and there was a strong collective focus on improving outcomes for all pupils.

In most schools, this vision was translated into effective operational management, where day-to-day decisions aligned closely with long-term strategic aims. Leaders in these schools displayed organisational strength and a capacity to navigate the complexities of school life with clarity and purpose.

In core inspections, robust governance arrangements supported the work of leaders well in many schools. In these schools, governors were well-informed and engaged, and offered appropriate levels of constructive challenge, contributing positively to the school's strategic direction. However, in a few schools, governors did not always take a strategic approach or drive whole-school improvement consistently.

Professional development was an area of strength in many schools and was closely aligned to school improvement priorities and individual targets. However, in a very few schools, professional development lacked the formality or coherence necessary to bring about meaningful, strategic change.

In most schools, a culture of self-improvement was embedded, which reinforced the schools' high standards and supported staff in refining their practice effectively. However, a minority of schools received recommendations to improve the clarity of self-evaluation work to ensure that it accurately identifies areas of the school's work that may benefit from improvement.

Five schools inspected this year did not fully comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. In four of these schools, this related to lapses in keeping up to date with changes in legislation, particularly concerning safer recruitment. In two of these schools, there were issues relating to the premises or overall site safety and suitability.

Overview of recommendations from inspections

Within this sector we leave recommendations for core and monitoring inspections. Across all inspection activity in 2024-2025, we left a total of 31 recommendations across the 13 schools inspected.

- A total of eight schools (62 %) were given a recommendation related to **teaching and learning**, focused on improving the consistency and quality of teaching, using assessment more effectively to inform instruction, and enriching the curriculum to support pupil progress and engagement.
- One school (8%) was given a recommendation related to **well-being, care, support and guidance**, focused on strengthening the school's promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- A total of 11 schools (85%) were given a recommendation related to **leading and improving**. Of those, four did not comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and were placed in a follow-up category. For these schools, one of their recommendations in inspection area 3 was to comply fully with the Independent School Standards.