

A report on

The Haven

**The Haven Cottage
Upper Bryn Coch Lane
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 4AE**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

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

About The Haven

Name of provider	The Haven
Proprietor status	Autism Initiatives
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent special
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	8
Pupils of statutory school age	8
Date of previous Estyn visit	07/05/2024
Start date of visit	18/06/2025

School context:

The Haven is an independent day school registered to provide education for up to eight pupils aged 11 to 19 who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC). It is owned and managed by the charity Autism Initiatives.

The school is located on the outskirts of Mold in North Wales. There are currently eight pupils on roll. All pupils have an individual development plan (IDP) and are placed by Flintshire local authority.

An acting headteacher has been in post since January 2025 due to the absence of the substantive headteacher. They are supported by a full-time teacher and a team of six teaching assistants. At the time of the inspection, the school also employed a teacher on a short-term contract to cover the absence of the substantive class teacher.

In May 2024, the Welsh Government formally requested Estyn to undertake an announced focused inspection of The Haven under section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The inspection focused specifically on evaluating the school's capacity to meet Standard 3 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, which relates to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, and aspects of Standard 5, which relates to the security of the school site.

At the time of the focused visit, the school did not meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. The Welsh Government asked the school to produce a post-inspection action plan to address the areas of non-compliance. To comply fully with these requirements, the school was required to address the issues identified below for each standard.

Standard 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the proprietor should:

- ensure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school [6(a)]
- ensure that a written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils is drawn up and effectively implemented [6(b)]
- ensure those arrangements and that policy have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers [6(c)]
- ensure appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified [8(b)]
- the proprietor should ensure that all staff, supply staff and persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the independent school actively promote the well-being of pupils [9]
- ensure that all staff, supply staff, volunteers and pupils receive appropriate training in the school's safeguarding policy in accordance with any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers in relation to safeguarding [10(a)]
- ensure a written record of that training is maintained. [10(b)]
- ensure a written behaviour policy is drawn up and effectively implemented that:
 - encourages and rewards good behaviour
 - sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour
 - has regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers [11 (a)]
- ensure a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour [11(b)]
- ensure that bullying at the school is prevented so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy [12]
- ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [14]
- ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy [15]
- ensure that the policies and strategies required by this Part are reviewed regularly and updated when appropriate, and [18(a)]

Standard 5: Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

In order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the proprietor should:

- ensure that the school has effective security arrangements for the grounds and building [27(d)]

A team of HMI visited the school in November 2024 and April 2025 to discuss the school's progress against their action plan. Subsequently, HMI visited the school in June 2025 to evaluate the school's compliance with the previously non-compliant Standards.

Main findings

Since the focused visit in May 2024, the school has taken steps to improve safeguarding and site security. While initial actions were underway, the pace and impact of this work increased markedly following the appointment of the acting headteacher in January 2025, leading to accelerated progress in addressing areas of non-compliance.

The safeguarding policy has been appropriately revised to reflect Welsh Government guidance. Designated safeguarding persons now have defined responsibilities, and safeguarding is routinely discussed in team and line management meetings. Concerns are logged using a secure online system accessible only to appropriate staff.

Safeguarding is highly visible across the school. Signage clearly identifies safeguarding and first aid staff, and weekly safeguarding meetings are well recorded. Electronic systems for behaviour and safeguarding are used reliably to inform decision-making. Leaders maintain comprehensive training records, showing that all staff, including agency and supply workers, receive appropriate safeguarding training. Senior staff access enhanced training, including in child protection and autism awareness.

The proprietor has made significant investment in strengthening site security through appropriate and effective measures. These enhancements have improved the overall safety of the premises. However, some associated procedures to maintain these improvements over time are not yet fully embedded. Visitor management is efficient, supported by an electronic sign-in system that records key details. Pupil arrivals are calm and supervised. Emergency procedures have been strengthened through regular fire drills, a clearly communicated lockdown plan and the installation of additional fire alarm pads near exits.

The school has significantly improved the premises. Upgrades include new furniture, redecoration, and improved flooring. These enhancements, alongside updated fire detection systems and the removal of hazards in areas such as boiler rooms, contribute to a safe and tidy environment. The acting headteacher, supported by colleagues from a partner school, oversees health and safety effectively. Medical and first aid records are securely stored, and supplies are routinely checked.

Behaviour management is underpinned by a clear policy, and leaders regularly review behaviour data. Positive behaviour is promoted through the 'Achieve Points' system and individual tutorials. Staff implement de-escalation strategies, such as accompanied walks, safely and with appropriate risk assessments. The recently updated anti-bullying policy clearly sets out expectations, including how to respond to cyberbullying and bullying linked to protected characteristics.

Pupils are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe through daily staff interactions, weekly tutorials and sessions led by staff and the local police community support officer. Online safety measures are effective, with restricted access and alert systems in place.

Overall, since the focused visit in May 2024, leaders have taken effective action to address previous non-compliance.

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

Not considered on this visit.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Not considered on this visit.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

Not considered on this visit.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this visit, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

Not considered on this visit.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Not considered on this visit.

Recommendation regarding continued registration

There is no evidence that the school does not comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

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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