

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Children Act 1989 as amended by the
Care Standards Act 2000

**Inspection report
Boarding schools**

Rydal Penrhos Senior School

Pwllcrochan Avenue
Colwyn Bay
LL29 7BT

Date of publication – 27/02/10

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Contact telephone number:	01492 530155
Name of Headteacher/Principal:	Rydal Penrhos
Name of Matron/Head of Care:	Mr Tim Cashell
Number of places:	134 (Max 180)
Dates of this inspection:	January 2010
Dates of other relevant contact since last report:	
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Inspected by:	John Nutley
Other regions contributing to this report:	

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Guidelines on inspection

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been compiled following an inspection of the Independent Boarding School undertaken by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000.
- 1.2. The purpose of the report is to comment on the quality of the service provided, including the organisation and management of the boarding provision and also the quality of support delivered to the children and young people who live there.
- 1.3. The report contains information on the process of inspection and records its outcomes. This inspection focuses on the National Minimum Standards for Independent Boarding Schools and the school's own statement of boarding principles and practice.
- 1.4. The report is divided into five sections reflecting the broad areas covered by the inspection:
 - Welfare Policies and Procedures
 - Organisation and Management
 - Welfare Support to Boarders
 - Staffing
 - Premises

CSSIW inspectors are authorised to enter and inspect independent boarding schools at any time. During each inspection episode there are visits to the school in addition to a range of other activities such as the Head Teacher's assessment of service, observation, interviews and the use of questionnaires. CSSIW tries to find the best way of capturing the views of children and young persons in the school, their parents, care staff and their experiences of the service. Visits may also be made to the school at any other time throughout the three-year inspection cycle in response to changes in the service or to investigate complaints, for example.

Inspection enables CSSIW to satisfy itself that the boarding element of the school should continue to operate.

Over a three – year period inspectors will:

- Consult with service users, which in this context means children and young people as well as parents about their experience of the independent boarding school
- Inspect the premises used for the boarding element of the school
- Talk to the Matron / Head of Care and staff
- Satisfy themselves that appropriate policies and processes are in operation and that all records are being properly maintained

Inspectors are mindful that they have access to detailed personal information about children and young people and those who may be caring for them and that as a consequence their actions could potentially conflict with the rights and privacy of others. Whenever possible, therefore, the informed consent of those involved will be obtained before holding discussions with them or seeing their records.

Readers must be aware that a report is intended to reflect the findings of the inspector during a specific inspection period. Readers should not conclude that the circumstances of the service will be the same at all times; sometimes services improve and sometimes they deteriorate. The National Minimum Standards are technical and detailed in nature and CSSIW does not closely examine all aspects of these standards on each visit.

If an aspect of the service falls short of that required to meet the National Minimum Standards, CSSIW will make requirements on the service to make improvements. The report clearly indicates any such requirements made by CSSIW. This will include any made since the last inspection report which have now been met, any that remain outstanding and any new requirements arising from this recent inspection. Where requirements are made, the provider may develop an action plan to show how they plan to make the necessary changes and you may wish to discuss this with them.

The reader should note that requirements made in the previous report which are not listed as outstanding have been appropriately complied with. The report will also comment on aspects of service that are felt to be positive.

If you have concerns about anything arising from the inspector's findings, you may wish to discuss these with CSSIW or with the Head Teacher or Matron / Head of Care.

The report clearly indicates any requirements and good practice recommendations that have been made by CSSIW. This includes those made by CSSIW since that last inspection report which have now been met, those which remain outstanding and any new ones from this inspection. The reader should note that requirements or good practice recommendations made in last year's report, which are not listed as outstanding, have been appropriately complied with.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales is required to make reports available to the public. The report is a public document and will be available on the National Assembly website: www.CSSIW.wales.gov.uk

Inspector`s summary of findings

This is the three yearly inspection of Rydal Penrhos School under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the associated National Minimum Standards for mainstream boarding schools. CSSIW is responsible for the inspection of the boarding provision and the welfare of boarders. Other shorter visits may take place in the intervening period to monitor progress or to deal with issues such as complaints about the school's operation of the boarding provision. Estyn is responsible for the inspection of education provision at the school.

The school currently has 134 boarding pupils. There have been significant changes at the school since the last inspection, not least a new Headmaster. There is a new Head of Pastoral Care and new Chaplain, previously these two roles had been held by one person.

The school was inspected over three days by one inspector and the inspection included:

- Examination of the pre-inspection information provided by the school
- Examination of records
- Inspection of boarding premises
- Interviews with the Headmaster, Head of Pastoral Care and the school's Chaplain
- Interviews with boarding staff
- Interview with nursing staff
- Informal discussion with boarders over three evenings
- Observation of key periods of the day
- Sharing of meals with boarders
- Informal discussion with other staff
- Interview with the head of maintenance
- Observation of a house staff meeting
- Consideration of questionnaire returns from staff and boarders.

Overall the inspector considers that the school continues to be well run with the transition to the new Headmaster being a positive change. There was continued evidence of good practice in caring for boarders. All the staff spoken to expressed commitment to the school and its pupils.

Boarders were positive about aspects of the school, their opportunities and leisure activities. The quality of staff/boarder relationships was of particular note. Boarders made positive comments about their experiences and were able to discuss in a mature manner any areas of difficulty and to offer possible solutions. All boarders were polite, well behaved and helpful to the inspector.

From this inspection visit there are a number of positive areas of practice at the school. In particular:

- Competent and committed staff with clear understanding of the task
- Welfare of boarders is a central aspect of care
- Quality of staff/boarder relationships of particular note
- Senior Management Team are focused on the development of the whole school

One issue raised by boarders related to the provision of suitable cookers in one of the boarding houses. This has been addressed by the school before the publishing of this report, the school is commended for this prompt action.

The inspector recognises that the inspection process is demanding for all involved and would like to thank the Headmaster, staff and boarders for their warm welcome, assistance, co-operation and contributions to the inspection process.

Section one – Welfare policies and procedures

Inspector`s findings:

The school provides for each new pupil and their parents an information booklet. This document provides all the required information for a new pupil and their parents. In discussion with the boarders they stated that this booklet influenced their decision to attend the school.

The school has a comprehensive anti bullying policy, which details how an incident of bullying will be handled. In discussion with the boarders it was apparent that bullying is not a problem within the school or the boarding houses.

The school supplied the Inspector with a completed Self Assessment Form with all the required supporting documentation. There has been an increase in the number of house staff since the last inspection. (See section four)

The school had previously supplied copies of their policy and procedures relating to the management of behaviour. From talking to the boarders it was evident that they were all aware of what types of sanctions are available to staff within the school but also indicated that they were not imposed on a regular basis.

The school has an appropriate policy on responding to complaints from boarders and parents. All boarders, parents and staff are aware of this policy. Documentation is made available to the parents defining the means by which they may raise complaints about the care of the children in the school. A written record is kept of all serious complaints.

The Head of Care is the child protection officer for the school and organises child protection training for the school. Many staff will undertake refresher child protection training in January 2010. Copies of the 2008 All Wales Child Protection Procedures are available in key locations around school.

The school has an appropriate policy on countering major risks to health, including substance abuse. The school keeps records in relation to the health needs of individual boarders. These individual records contain relevant health information provided by parents and records of any significant health needs. These include significant known drug reactions, major allergies and notable medical conditions, and this information is available to staff likely to administer medication or treatment to the boarders. Confidentiality of personal information about boarders is protected as all the records are kept in a locked filing cabinet within the school's medical centre. The school has an effective arrangement for securing medical consent for pupils as necessary. The school employs a designated nurse who holds a current nursing registration. The boarders have the choice as to whether or not a member of staff accompanies them when being seen by Doctor or Dentist, and where possible boarders can choose either a male or female doctor.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	NMS number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	NMS number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	NMS number

Good Practice recommendations:

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Section two – Organisation and management

Inspector`s findings:

There have been significant changes in the senior management of the school since the last inspection. The management of the school continues to exercise clear guidance and leadership to address the process of appraisal and improvement of the living arrangements.

The school organises its boarding houses in a way that is satisfactory and provides appropriate protection by separating boarders by age and/or gender. This is achieved by having six houses, one is for female boarders and this is divided up by having different ages on different floors. The other four houses are for male pupils, which are divided into junior and senior boys. The sixth house is a junior mixed house, the boys and girls are accommodated on separate floors. This has addressed concerns raised at the last inspection where two boarding houses had an age range of 8 to 15 years old. The Inspector visited all the boarding accommodation, with the maintenance manager; it was obvious there were no significant differences between the provision and facilities between houses.

The school has increased the range and choice of activities for the boarders outside of teaching time alongside some free time, many of these are competitive in format. Boarders spoken to state that they enjoy this form of activities. The boarders have access to the Internet during the school day, this is supervised at all times. There is also wireless access to the internet in all the boarding houses, however there appears to be a few gaps in its availability. The school are working to resolve this issue. All the computers have a 'firewall' system installed to prevent access to and from unsuitable web sites.

The boarders have an opportunity to express their views on relevant aspects of the boarding provision through the boarders' forum. The head of Pastoral Care chairs the forum. Each house organises its own house meeting to discuss issues relating to the organisation of the boarding accommodation. On the whole the students felt that these meetings were quite constructive.

The school has a prefect system for the main school, with an agreed role set out within the school policy. However this role does not extend beyond the school into any of the boarding houses.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	NMS number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	NMS number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	NMS number

Good Practice recommendations:

Section three – Welfare support to boarders

Inspector`s findings:

The Core Pastoral Team meets twice a month to address any concerns raised about a pupil. The Core Pastoral Team records the concern and the action to be taken and by whom in the minutes. This has resulted in issues not being followed through. A recording system for welfare plans needs to be introduced, these records must record how the school is addressing welfare needs of individual pupils. This should record the pupils name, what is the concern, what action is being taken, timescales, by whom and an outcome.

The school has a policy on equal opportunities that relates to the employment of staff and to the admission to the school of pupils. The information supplied to the inspector prior to the inspection entitled 'Integration – whilst respecting cultural diversity' goes on to give evidence that Islamic pupils are offered facilities for Ramadan, food requirements and prayers. Chinese new year is celebrated with a special Chinese meal and trips to Chinatown in Manchester. Overseas boarders are also supported within the school's English as a foreign language department.

Boarders have contact with their parents and visits by parents to their children at the school are facilitated. Each house has access to a payphone to make and receive private phone calls. Most boarders also have the use of a mobile phone, also most have access to the internet within their boarding houses to send and receive e-mails. Boarders were able to confirm these arrangements.

Boarders may leave valuables with house parents. House parents also look after junior pupils' pocket money. Each house parent records all transactions. The issue of pocket money is also addressed within the information booklet supplied to new pupils and their parents. The school supplies every pupil with lockers that are lockable within school. Some boarding houses also have their own lockable cupboards in which to keep valuables. However boarders are encouraged to give valuables to their house parents for safekeeping, a record of this is kept by the houseparent.

All new boarders are given the school's information booklet for new pupils and their parents. New pupils who join the school at the beginning of the year in September have an induction day. These involve the pupil arriving the day before existing pupils and boarders and are given a positive helpful induction time within their allotted boarding house. The school also has a list of areas that need to be covered within the induction process and the timetable set out for the induction day.

The school does obtain CRB enhanced certificates for all staff employed on boarding duties and guardians.

The meals provided to the boarders are on the whole adequate in quantity, quality, and choice. Provision is made for special dietary, medical or religious needs. Boarders stated that if they have concerns about the quality or quantity of food provided they can raise the issue at the boarders forum. The catering arrangements, preparation and storage areas were not inspected at this time, the inspector did have the opportunity to eat with staff and children during the inspection period. The dining room and its furnishings are of

suitable size and quantity, taking into account the ages and numbers of boarders catered for. Crockery and cutlery is available in sufficient quantities. Although there is some queuing for meals there is sufficient time available for children to finish the meals properly before returning to class or their boarding houses.

The school provides for all pupils water fountains (free), drink machines (coins) snack machines (coins) in the dining hall and in the sixth form common room. These are accessible after breakfast and during the majority of the day. All water provided at washbasin taps can be drunk. A drinks machine is also available within the sports hall during the day. All boarding houses have kitchens with facilities to store food and prepare snacks hygienically. It was raised as an issue that the senior girl's house did not have adequate cooking facilities. This issue had been resolved before the publishing of this report. The school holds regular fire drills during the school day. They also complete individual fire drills for each of the boarding houses. And these are recorded appropriately.

House staff and tutors are aware of the demands they make upon pupils. Pupils are encouraged to use the 'Planners' that the school provides and these are monitored on a regular basis. Much of the extra curricular and sporting activities form part of the boarders' timetable, and where possible does not encroach on their prep or free time. It is acknowledged that the school day is long starting at 8:30 and finishing at 20:30 with the end of prep. No other children or young people use the boarding houses.

The school carries out risk assessments on all high-risk activities. Boarders have access to Colwyn Bay town centre on a Saturday. They are required to sign out to visit the town. Juniors must go in groups of more than two. The sixth formers are allowed more freedom and can visit the town on their own every day of the week. Sixth form boarders have access to Llandudno town with permission. Upper sixth boarders can have visits to Colwyn Bay town on Saturday evenings. Older boarders do moan about these restrictions but are also aware of the school's duty of care. Boarders can also visit the local library. There is no cinema in Colwyn Bay, but visits are organised to the cinema in Llandudno Junction. These visits are organised on a school or house basis. Staff always accompany boarders on these trips. All boarders have access to newspapers and television. Information about local events is displayed in the school, the learning resource centre has a selection of periodicals and relevant displays. Boarders can also apply for special leave to attend concerts during the week if requested by their parents who will also have to supply written permission for these trips. All first aid and treatment of minor illnesses is given by or under the supervision of the school nurse. Boarders who become ill in school are adequately supervised. This initially is by the house parents. However, if the illness is of a more serious nature the house parents are able to contact someone for help and advice from the Health Centre. If necessary the Health Centre can provide isolation and regular check-ups.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	NMS number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required	Original timescale	NMS number

(previous outstanding requirements)	for completion	

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	NMS number
A recording system for welfare plans need to be introduced, these records must record how the school is addressing welfare needs of individual pupils. This record must include the pupils name, what is the concern, what action is being taken, timescale, by whom and an outcome.	12/04/10	17.2

Good Practice recommendations:

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Section four- Staffing.

Inspector`s findings:

Since the last inspection the school has increased the number of staff employed to work on each boarding house. Therefore whenever boarders return to their houses there is a member of staff on duty who is accessible and has responsibility for the house. This may be the houseparent, matron or a tutor assigned to the house. Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff. Each boarder knows which member of staff is on duty at any given time. The Head of Boarding would be contacted in case of any unforeseen circumstances or sickness that could result in a boarding house not being staffed.

The number of staff required to accompany and be responsible for boarders on an organised trip away from the school site, overnight stays and trips abroad is assessed for each visit/trip so that they satisfy the guidance on minimum ratios.

Each time the border leaves the premises there is a procedure for signing in and out so their whereabouts can be monitored. Gap students are used to assist houseparents to supervise boarders within their houses however a full-time member of staff is always contactable if required. Gap students are not required to supervise boarders off-site on their own.

There is at least one member of staff 'sleeping in' in each boarding house every night who is responsible for the boarders in the house. The majority of houses have two members of staff available at all times when the house is occupied. Since the last inspection all boarding houses have been fitted with a intruder alarm which is used to monitor access to the property during the night.

Each of the boarders knows how to contact a member of staff if they have the need during the night. In the case of fire or any other exceptional circumstances the member of staff has knowledge of the number of pupils accommodated at that time via the signing in and out register.

Each houseparent has an appropriate job description. Each houseparent is also given a copy of the publication 'Running a School Boarding House' (BSA/DfEE). Rydal Penrhos is a close community and the more established houseparents provide a mentoring service for newer staff. Each houseparent has been given a copy of the National Minimum Standards for Mainstream Boarding Schools. Regular houseparent meetings allow reviews to take place of any changes implemented. The houseparent has access to the copies of Rydal Penrhos Policies, a staff handbook and a houseparents' handbook. The houseparents' handbook covers the school's approach to boarding, safeguarding and promoting the boarder's welfare, child protection, bullying and sanctions policies.

From the Inspector's observations it was apparent that the relationships between staff and boarders are based on mutual respect and understanding and there were clear professional and personal boundaries. The staff employed at the school were able to set and maintain safe, consistent and understandable boundaries for the children in relation to acceptable behaviour.

The school has a policy on the respect of privacy within the boarding houses. This covers areas such as photographs, personal space, correspondence, sexual orientation, progress reports, counselling, health, data protection, medical records, special educational needs and any matters relating to child protection.

During the Inspector's visit to the boarding houses it was observed that before entering bedrooms and bathrooms etc. the member of staff always knocked on the door and waited to be invited in. Young people also confirmed the practice of staff knocking on the door and waiting to be invited in.

The obtaining of CRB enhanced certificates is undertaken by the bursary. Prior to staff being appointed the checks required by national minimum standards are carried out, this includes:- checks of identity, two written references to include the most recent employer, CV's showing a full history of employment followed by an interview before a letter of appointment is issued.

Gap students from outside the UK are vetted through an agency known to the school. The agency should supply full details on the students' background and, on behalf of the school, any criminal record. From the evidence seen during the inspection this information is available on the files held in school.

The house parents would not be permitted to allow their own visitors to have access to the boarding accommodation. To facilitate this each boarding house has a separate entrance direct to the houseparents accommodation, which avoid unnecessary contact with the boarders.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	NMS number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	NMS number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	NMS number

Good practice recommendations:

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Section five – Premises

Inspector`s findings:

The school has in place a full refurbishment policy. From the Inspector's observations all six boarding houses are well heated and ventilated, lit by natural and artificial light, regularly decorated, have good quality furnishings which includes for each boarder a single bed, wardrobe, bedside locker and a desk. Bedrooms are carpeted, with curtains at all windows and pin boards for boarders to personalise their own areas.

Bedrooms within the boarding houses have up to a maximum of four beds in each, mainly in the junior houses, with senior houses having mainly double or single bedrooms. All the houses have a good level of cleanliness with hygienic kitchen areas. There is also plenty of space within the houses for social and leisure activities.

The security of the buildings is of paramount importance to the school and every effort is made to ensure that no unauthorised person has access. This is achieved in part by all entrances to boarding houses being protected by coded keypads, and these codes are changed at regular intervals and the recent introduction of intruder alarms.

In every boarding house at the school the boarders' sleeping areas are exclusively for the use of the pupils in that house, and boarders' living areas (common rooms, kitchens etc.) are for the exclusive use of the pupils in that house. Friends from other boarding houses may be invited to share these areas in such cases pupils must 'sign in' and follow the procedures of that house.

Although the general public at specific times uses some school facilities, no access to boarding houses is organised or permitted. The Rydal Penrhos campus is very large and fragmented and every reasonable measure is taken by the school to prevent or deter any unauthorised public access to any of the school buildings or grounds. The Inspector observed that it would be the normal routine for all visitors to sign in and out at reception. Visitors are met and escorted by member of staff or senior pupil.

Each of the boarding houses has a separate houseparents' flat. There is access to each flat that does not involve passing through any boarding accommodation. Five of the six houses are single sex, the mixed house is for junior pupils where girls' and boys' bedrooms are on different floors. Any tutors or gap students associated with the house have separate living accommodation.

All sleeping accommodation is suitably furnished. Nearly all bedrooms in every house have a similar style and make of furniture. Much of the boarding accommodation is situated in large Victorian houses with large rooms. Wherever possible, these have been divided to create smaller bedrooms. The majority of the bedrooms have one, two or three beds. There are a few four bedded rooms in the junior houses. Most rooms are large and airy and allow plenty of space between beds. It is the schools policy to offer upper sixth boarders single study bedrooms although some choose to share.

All organised and private study takes place in the boarding houses. The majority of boarders have facilities in their own bedrooms, although junior houses have the communal prep area. On a Saturday morning, study is completed in the boarding

houses under supervision.

In every boarding house there are adequate numbers of toilets and washing facilities. All boarding houses have toilets located throughout the house. Showers are within separate cubicles, which are also well distributed throughout the house. Some of the houses also have bathrooms.

Within the sports hall there is provision for two boys' and two girls' changing rooms with showers. There are other areas where pupils may change for an activity, for example after sailing showers are available in 'Ingleside' and following rugby matches or practice sessions facilities are available in the school pavilion. These facilities were not inspected during this visit so it is not possible to comment on their suitability.

All boarding houses are situated within large gardens and there are areas where boarders can sit and relax. Some houses have large areas of grass as part of the garden or adjacent to the garden where ball games can be played. The floodlit astro pitch is sometimes available but can only be used under supervision. Similarly, the facilities in the sports hall and squash courts are often used.

All departments within the school undertake risk assessments. Outdoor activities have complete assessments on activities undertaken away from the school. The school has two health and safety committees that meet twice yearly; one is in relation to the school and other for technical services.

The estate manager who is responsible for building and grounds maintenance stated that the department is very good in relation to reactive repairs. The system is that the houseparent or teacher reports a fault by email to a central inbox, when the remedial work has been completed this is recorded on a central spreadsheet. There is annual programme of electrical inspections and PAT testing of electrical equipment.

In other areas where they do not have specialist knowledge within the maintenance team e.g. checking of gas appliances, testing of fire alarm systems and extinguishers, these are carried out by external contract.

The school has its own Health Centre, which was visited by the Inspector. There was an opportunity to have a detailed discussion with the nurse in charge. The nurse in charge is also part of the school's pastoral care team, which has been discussed earlier in this report.

All of the boarders' personal laundry is washed in the individual houses using commercial style washers and dryers. The responsibility for this is the matron of each house. The clean and dried clothing is then placed in separate piles for the pupils to collect on their return from school. If a boarder requires dry-cleaning this is sent to a professional organisation. Boarders in the senior houses are given the opportunity to undertake the task of completing their own personal laundry. However, this is governed by their commitment to other activities and studies, particularly around the time of external exams.

Boarders' bedding etc. is regularly changed and laundered by the school.

The pupils access accommodation outside the school during the school holidays (Exeat weekend and half terms) through the school's educational guardian scheme.

The majority of the off-site accommodation for pupils is arranged through outside agencies as part of skiing trips or adventure weekends. In exchange trips pupils are monitored carefully by the school. Procedures for this type of activity is outlined for all staff in the document "The safety of education visits and travel".

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	NMS number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	NMS number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	NMS number

Good Practice recommendations:

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