

Additional inspection report

23 January 2026

Ryecroft School

Kent Street

Walsall

WS2 7AN

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Inspection outcome

The school meets all the relevant Standards that were considered during this inspection.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 9(a), (b) and (c), 11, 14, 15, 16(a) and (b).

1. Governors' monitoring showed that leaders had not always implemented safeguarding and safer recruitment policies and procedures effectively. Following a self-referral to the local authority and children's services, governors have taken swift and appropriate action to address all safeguarding concerns, including a comprehensive safeguarding review by the local authority. Governors have made retrospective referrals where required and appointed an acting senior leadership team and leader responsible for safeguarding with the knowledge, skills and experience required to implement the action plan and ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Governance oversight of all aspects of safeguarding has been enhanced so that governors' visits regularly include direct observation of all aspects of provision, detailed scrutiny of records, and discussions with the leader responsible for safeguarding, staff and pupils. The newly appointed regional director and headteacher use their weekly meetings effectively to evaluate all aspects of safeguarding and to ensure that there is a robust culture of safeguarding throughout the school.
3. Leaders now ensure the school's safeguarding policies meet statutory requirements, take account of contextual risks and are implemented consistently. Newly appointed and appropriately trained safeguarding leaders have sufficient time to manage their extensive responsibilities effectively. Members of the safeguarding team now work effectively together, ensuring that there is continuous risk assessment of each pupil in relation to their wellbeing and safeguarding needs, and appropriate communication with all staff, particularly through twice daily briefings. The leader responsible for safeguarding works closely with the local authority, school leaders and the regional director to ensure that all requirements continue to be met.
4. Thorough induction of new staff includes an introduction to the school's safeguarding, behaviour and whistleblowing policies, staff code of conduct and how to contact the safeguarding leaders. The leader responsible for safeguarding has implemented comprehensive regular training for staff in partnership with the local authority. Leaders make effective use of formal discussions and quizzes to evaluate the knowledge and understanding of staff. Staff know how to use the school's electronic system for recording all concerns, and the action they should take with regard to any concerns about a pupil, any disclosures, physical intervention and the wellbeing of pupils. They understand the importance of recognising and reporting low-level concerns in relation to the behaviour of adults. Leaders record and monitor low-level concerns thoroughly and take appropriate action without delay.
5. The safeguarding team receives alerts when staff make an entry onto the school's electronic system for recording concerns. The team ensures that there is a clear and comprehensive summary of the concerns, details of how the concern is followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome, including when referrals are made. The safeguarding team continually monitors records in order to detect any patterns. The team takes timely, appropriate action, as required, including making referrals to early help, the local authority, police and children's services.

6. The school employs suitable filtering and monitoring software to safeguard pupils from online harm when using devices. Leaders use this regularly tested software effectively to block access to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content. Pupils learn how to keep safe, particularly through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE), including learning about online dangers and the impact of online bullying. Through engaging with key staff, displays, posters, assemblies and personal interactions, pupils learn that there are adults who understand them and who will listen to them and take action to ensure their wellbeing.
7. Staff implement a clear, positive behaviour policy with strategies to support neurodivergent pupils and those with social and emotional needs based on the principles of praise, connect, co-regulate and co-reflect. Teachers record pupils' behaviour in detail using the school's behaviour management system. Leaders monitor records diligently and discuss these during the daily briefings in order that appropriate support can be put in place. Staff receive additional training to reinforce their understanding of de-escalation and physical intervention techniques. Leaders ensure that positive behaviour is supported through routines, reinforced by visual timetables and an environment that is comfortable, familiar and predictable. Staff rarely use physical intervention which is a very last resort. Leaders ensure the maintenance of fully detailed records of any physical intervention and inform parents and the regional director promptly.
8. Governors and leaders ensure that the school complies with the relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively a suitable health and safety policy. Leaders' routine monitoring of the premises, together with the prompt reporting and effective management of any concerns, promotes safe working practices and supports compliance with relevant legislation.
9. Appropriate deployment of staff, who carry out their duties effectively, ensures a high level of pupil supervision throughout the day. Leaders carefully assess the supervision needs of pupils prior to admission, taking account of the requirements outlined in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Leaders assign additional on-call staff to each part of the school day. These members of staff provide further support if a pupil becomes dysregulated.
10. Leaders maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with statutory requirements. The school informs the local authority appropriately of any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition times. Those with designated safeguarding responsibilities monitor attendance closely and follow up any absences each day. They identify pupils whose attendance causes concern and take immediate steps to engage and support parents so that attendance rates improve. Through this proactive and caring approach, pupils who struggle to overcome their anxieties are now attending school regularly and pupils' attendance is in line with national averages.
11. Governors and leaders demonstrate a comprehensive and well-developed understanding of strategic risk and effective risk management across the school. Leaders maintain a comprehensive range of risk assessments that cover the premises, activities, curriculum and educational visits, as well as individual pupils whose safeguarding or behavioural needs require additional risk assessment. Frequent review and updating of these assessments in response to emerging risks ensure that the school's approach remains proactive, robust, and responsive to the needs of pupils and staff.
12. The school meets the Standards.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

ISSR paragraphs 17, 18(1), 18(2)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), 18(3), 18(4)(a), (b) and (c), 20(1), 20(4), 20(5)(a)(i) and (ii), 20(6)(a)(i) and (ii), (b)(i), (ii) and (iii), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3)(a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii) and (b)

13. Governors' monitoring identified that safer recruitment policies and procedures had not been followed consistently, particularly regarding the obtaining and verification of suitable references. Working closely with the local authority, all recruitment checks have since been reviewed in detail and appropriate action taken to address any shortcomings.
14. Governors have strengthened the school's appointment procedures to ensure that a thorough and structured process is implemented consistently with a focus on ensuring that only suitable individuals are employed to work with children. Leaders now provide clear job descriptions that outline safeguarding responsibilities, scrutinise applications for gaps or inconsistencies, and apply robust shortlisting procedures, including online checks where appropriate. Interviews incorporate safeguarding-focused questions to assess candidates' understanding of child protection and professional boundaries.
15. All the required pre-employment checks are completed before any adult begins working at the school. Governors and leaders ensure these checks are recorded accurately on the single central record, which they monitor regularly and diligently.
16. The school meets the Standards.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraphs 25, 28(1)(a) and (b)

17. Governors and leaders have completed an extensive refurbishment of the school. This work provides a library, sensory room, soft equipment room for physical education, therapy room, cookery facilities and an attractive dining room, where pupils and staff can socialise during breaktimes. Appropriately trained maintenance staff respond promptly to any concerns so that the health, safety and welfare of pupils is prioritised. Governors provide regular and detailed oversight of the premises to ensure that they are clean, maintained to a high standard and meet the needs of the pupils.
18. The school recently experienced extensive flood damage in one part of the school. Leaders took prompt and appropriate action to address the damage and ensure that any mould is treated properly. The affected area has been securely cordoned off, and pupils have been sensitively relocated to alternative accommodation within the school. As a result, education and care have continued with minimal disruption while the flood damage is being resolved in accordance with health and safety requirements.
19. Pupils can access appropriate toilet facilities and suitable drinking water throughout the day.
20. The school meets the Standards.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

21. The school provides parents with information relating to safeguarding by publishing its safeguarding policy on the school's website.
22. The school meets the Standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraph 34(a), (b) and (c)

23. Governors have responded swiftly and appropriately when their monitoring identified weaknesses relating to safeguarding and staff recruitment. They have worked closely with the local authority and children's services to conduct an extensive safeguarding review and have taken action to address all shortcomings fully, including making referrals, as required.
24. Governors have strengthened their oversight of all aspects of school provision, including central monitoring of recruitment checks and the verification of references. The headteacher's termly report to governors now provides detailed and accurate information regarding attendance, behaviour, bullying, recruitment, safeguarding records and referrals to the local authority and children's services, health and safety, and staff training. Combined with comprehensive reporting from the regional director, this enables governors to ask challenging questions, evaluate how effectively the school is meeting the Standards, ensure the maintenance of a secure culture of safeguarding, and take timely action whenever necessary.
25. Extensive staff training, thorough monitoring and support and challenge from governors now ensures that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their responsibilities, promote pupils' wellbeing, and ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
26. The school meets the Standards.

School details

School	Ryecroft School
Department for Education number	335/6014
Address	Ryecroft School Kent Street Walsall WS2 7AN
Phone number	01922 687381
Email address	info@ryecroftschool.co.uk
Website	www.ryecroftschool.co.uk
Proprietor	P Bloom Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Acting headteacher	Mr Martin Capewell
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	56
Number of children in the early years	1
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 April 2025

Information about the school

27. Ryecroft School is a co-educational day school which provides education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), particularly those with complex needs including autism spectrum conditions, mental health conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and impaired social or cognitive functioning due to early life trauma and attachment needs. The school is owned and operated by P Bloom Ltd. The acting headteacher took up his post in January 2026.
28. Children in the early years are supported within the nurture pathway according to their needs.
29. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
30. The school has identified seven pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
31. The school states that its aims are to provide a calm, structured and highly nurturing environment in which pupils feel safe, understood and ready to learn. It seeks to prioritise communication, independence and emotional regulation by tailoring the curriculum, routines and support to meet individual needs. The school community strives to develop effective partnerships with families and specialists which support pupils in developing the knowledge, skills and confidence for their next steps in education and life.

Purpose of the additional inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. This inspection was an unannounced additional inspection which was carried out at the request of the Department for Education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 January 2026

32. Two reporting inspectors visited the school for one day.

33. Inspection activities included:

- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
- tour of the school site
- discussions with the proprietor and regional director
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant Standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net