

SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION'S BRIEF – SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS

A	<p><u>What matter is being considered?</u></p> <p>The item 'Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools' was added as an additional item to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee's annual work programme after the annual workshop at the request of scrutiny members.</p> <p>The arrangements were scrutinised at the Committee's meeting on 18 July 2024. There was an informal discussion after the meeting as to the possibility of holding a Task and Finish Group or Scrutiny Investigation into the field. It was concluded that further discussion should take place at the Committee's informal meeting on 5 September 2024 where concern was expressed by members present about the implementation of the safeguarding arrangements within our schools.</p> <p>The Cabinet has approved and adopted a 'Response to Offending Plan' at its meeting on 21 January 2025, which includes investigations and further work to ensure safeguarding arrangements, among other objectives. The response plan looks broadly at a number of different areas, and the scrutiny investigation – safeguarding arrangements in schools is included as one of the work streams in the Plan. The investigation will look at current safeguarding arrangements in schools.</p> <p>Additionally, following positive discussions between the Children's Commissioner, officers and Cabinet Members in November, and a further meeting between the Chief Executive and the Commissioner on the 9th of December, the Commissioner was invited to contribute to the Response Plan with an offer for her officials to be part of the process to monitor progress on the various work streams. This discussion continues with very positive dialogue.</p>
B	<p><u>Aim of the Investigation</u></p> <p>The main question to address is:</p> <p>'Are the safeguarding arrangements in the county's schools appropriate and implemented consistently?'</p> <p>It is intended to do this by asking the following key questions:</p> <p><u>Research and establish facts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the requirements including guidance in newsletters and guidelines on 'safeguarding requirements' in schools? (<i>Legal Services</i>) • What are the safeguarding arrangements for schools in Gwynedd? (<i>Council's internal experts in safeguarding, Education Department regarding safeguarding policies</i>) • How does the collaboration between schools/the Education Department and the Children Department work? (<i>Internal council experts – Education Department and Children and Supporting Families Department + responses of questionnaire to schools</i>) • What are the findings/views of Estyn (the regulators in the field) on arrangements in Gwynedd schools? (<i>Authority's arrangements</i>)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there examples of good practice nationally, and what would top-quality safeguarding arrangements look like in schools? (i.e. how could good arrangements be ensured). • What do the schools say about their safeguarding arrangements and the support by the authority - are there specific themes? (<i>results of the annual questionnaire from schools</i>) <p><u>Sample of schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the arrangements work in practice in the schools? <p>Focus on the following specific schools: 6 primary schools (of the 78) 3 secondary schools (of the 12) 1 all-through school (of the two) 1 special school (of the two)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the findings/views of Estyn (the regulators in the field) on arrangements in Gwynedd schools? (<i>the arrangements of the schools from the sample</i>) • What do the schools themselves say about their safeguarding arrangements? - (<i>schools' annual questionnaire on safeguarding</i>) <p><u>Visits:</u></p> <p>Talk to Governors (including the designated safeguarding Governor), Head and Staff (including the designated Safeguarding Officer) in each setting.</p>
C	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Background documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2020 - Supplementary guidance for inspecting Safeguarding by Estyn - Estyn Report 2023 - about the authority - Cyngor Gwynedd's Safeguarding Policy - Safeguarding Strategic Panel and Operational Safeguarding Group's Terms of Reference - Safeguarding Children in Gwynedd Schools Model Policy - Reports/Safeguarding Policies for schools visited - Latest reports from Estyn - Annual questionnaire 'schools safeguarding'
CH	<p><u>Gathering Evidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External expert in the field - The Council's Internal Experts in the field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Safeguarding officers (Statutory Director of Social Services, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department, Referral Team (Children Department), Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality - Children Department; Safeguarding and Wellbeing Quality Leader, Education Protection and Wellbeing Officer - Education Department) o Head of Education Department o Legal Services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 11 schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Governors (Responsible/designated governors for safeguarding) o Head o Staff member with designated safeguarding responsibility within the school o Staff 		
D	<u>Analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weigh up the evidence gathered from those interviewed - Consider research information and background information 		
DD	<u>Writing the Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note main findings supported by evidence - Note the recommendations - Discuss and agree upon the draft Report with leaders of the work within the Council - Submit the Final Draft Report to the Scrutiny Committee for observations and endorsement - Publish the Final Report 		
E	<u>Action Plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet/Cabinet Member/Education Department to produce an action plan in response to the recommendations - Invite the Cabinet Member for Education and officers to discuss the action plan jointly with the Scrutineers 		
F	<u>Track Progress</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An update to enable the scrutineers to assess progress. 		
FF	<u>TIMETABLE</u>		
	What	Lead	Date
1	Adopt the Brief	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	13 February 2025
2	The Investigation Members' First Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Context – Cabinet Member for Education, Head of Education Department, Corporate Director of Social Services and the Legal Service - Consider how to hear pupils' voices as part of the investigation 	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	10 March 2025
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting to consider safeguarding arrangements in schools and the Authority's arrangements - Select schools to include in the sample 	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	17 March 2025
4	Meeting to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Views of Estyn on the Authority's arrangements - Good practice - School responses to questions about safeguarding in the annual questionnaire from the Authority 	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	31 March 2025

5	Consider reports/information about the schools in the sample and formulate questions for them	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	7 April 2025
6	Visit the schools (11 schools)	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	May / June / July 2025
7	Meeting to discuss initial impressions following the visits	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	22 July 2025
8	A meeting to discuss the visits	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	10 September 2025
9	Discussion with officers from the Children and Supporting Families Department	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	28 November 2025
10	Discussion with officers from the Corporate Services Department	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	2 March 2026
11	Appoint provider to undertake pupils' voice work	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	April 2026
12	Discussion with officers from the Education Department	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	23 April 2026
13	Pupils' voice work presentation	Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies	8 June 2026
14	Meeting to consider pupils' voice work and draft recommendations	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	10 June 2026
15	Analysis and Draft Report	Investigation Members and Lead Officer	June 2026
16	Final Draft Report - Meeting to share the scrutiny investigation's final draft report with the Cabinet Member for Education and the Head of Education Department along with the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families and the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department	Investigation Members Lead Officer Corporate Director	1 July 2026
17	Submission of the draft report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	Chair of the investigation	14 July 2026

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IN RELATION TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Summary

The key to effective safeguarding in a school is clear communication, defined responsibilities, and ongoing training for all staff. Each individual within the school community plays a role in identifying and reporting potential risks to children's safety and well-being, contributing to a safer environment for learners.

Safeguarding children and young people in schools is a priority, and there are various roles with specific responsibilities to ensure they are protected. These roles are influenced by national guidelines, such as the **Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014**, and local safeguarding procedures.

Below is a list of roles within a school environment, and their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people:

Role	Responsibilities
Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for the safety and well-being of all learners and staff. • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Ensure that safeguarding policies are in place and that staff receive training. • Promote a culture of safeguarding and inclusion throughout the school. • Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Ensure appropriate recruitment and DBS checks for all staff. • Ensure that the curriculum includes education on safeguarding and raising awareness of safeguarding. • Ensure that all staff receive appropriate safeguarding training.
The Designated Safeguarding Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead responsibility for safeguarding in the school. • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Ensure that the school's safeguarding policies are followed and that staff are trained. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Act as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns. • Make referrals to external agencies such as Social Services as necessary and maintain records. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Keep accurate records of safeguarding concerns, actions and outcomes
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person <i>(If one exists according to the School's Safeguarding Policy)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Designated Safeguarding Person and take over their duties in their absence. • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Assist with managing safeguarding concerns and record-keeping. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm.

Teaching Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Identify and report signs of safeguarding concerns, abuse, neglect, or harm. • Foster open and trusting relationships, where children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or experiences of abuse. • Create a safe environment for learners and students to disclose concerns. • Follow safeguarding procedures for reporting and responding to concerns. • Support vulnerable learners and ensure their well-being. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Foster open and trusting relationships, where children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or experiences of abuse. • Identify and report signs of safeguarding concerns, abuse, neglect, or harm. • Follow safeguarding procedures for reporting and responding to concerns • Support vulnerable learners and ensure their well-being. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Foster open and trusting relationships, where children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or experiences of abuse. • Support learners with special educational needs who may be vulnerable • Work with the Designated Safeguarding Person to ensure the safety of learners with additional needs • Promote inclusive safeguarding practices. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Governors/ Designated Safeguarding Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Ensure that the school has appropriate and robust safeguarding policies and procedures. • Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. • Support the Headteacher to create and promote a culture of safeguarding. • Ensure that the school complies with all statutory safeguarding requirements, including recruitment and DBS checks. • Ensure that the Headteacher and safeguarding staff are supported in their responsibilities. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.

School Reception Staff / Administrative Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Ensure safeguarding protocols are followed for visitors and learners. • Report any concerns about student safety or well-being. • Maintain confidentiality and support the safeguarding process. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
School Counsellor / Mental Health Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Provide emotional support to learners facing safeguarding issues. • Escalate concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Person while maintaining confidentiality. • Deliver workshops on mental health and well-being. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Caretakers / Site Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Ensure that the physical environment is safe. • Report any suspicious activity or safety concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Person. • Monitor the site for hazards or risks to learners. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Catering Staff, Lunch Staff, Breakfast Club Staff and After School Club Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Ensure student safety during extended care hours. • Be vigilant and report safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Person • Follow the safeguarding policies and maintain a safe environment.
Supply Staff / Professionals <i>External (e.g., County Council Officers, Sports Coaches, Guest Speakers)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Maintain professional boundaries with learners, and avoid any situations that could lead to potential harm. • Follow safeguarding procedures and report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Person • Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with learners. • Ensure they are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the school's safeguarding policies and report concerns. • Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with learners. • Complete the necessary safeguarding training. • Follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.

Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report any signs of abuse, bullying, or neglect involving themselves or others to a trusted adult • Treat others with respect, honour personal boundaries, privacy, and promote healthy, safe relationships. • Ask for help if they feel unsafe, are distressed, or experience difficulties, and encourage peers to seek help • Adhere to school safeguarding policies and behave responsibly.
Parents/Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that their home and environment are safe, and protect children from harm and abuse. • Be vigilant of signs of distress, bullying or behavioural changes, and address any problems promptly. • Educate their children about personal safety, boundaries and how to seek help if they feel unsafe, on-line and off-line. • Foster open and trusting relationships, where children feel comfortable sharing any concerns or experiences of abuse. • If they become aware of safeguarding issues, inform the relevant authorities or the school's safeguarding lead of those concerns to ensure that appropriate steps are taken. • Work with schools to support and reinforce safeguarding practices, attend meetings and support their child's well-being in the school environment.
The County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that schools and education providers comply with safeguarding legislation, policies and procedures. • Oversee the development of draft safeguarding policies and their implementation across schools and educational settings. • Provide guidance and support to the Designated Safeguarding Persons in schools and other educational settings. • Ensure that all education staff receive appropriate safeguarding training which is updated regularly. • Work with local safeguarding boards, social services, and other agencies to address safeguarding concerns. • Monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in schools and ensure that any issues are dealt with appropriately. • Hold schools to account for their safeguarding practices and intervene where necessary to protect children and young people. • Promote a culture of safeguarding across all educational services, ensuring that children's safety and well-being are prioritised.

SCHOOL CONTEXT SHEET

Name and address of school	
School telephone number	
Name of Headteacher	
Name of the Chair of Governors	
Name of Safeguarding Governor	
Name of Designated Safeguarding Person(s)	

Number of learners	
Free School Meals percentage	
ALN Percentage	
Attendance	
Exclusions - 3 year data	include information about times where a pupil was suspended while awaiting a decision from an Appeal Panel
Number of teachers	
Number of support staff	

Relevant information from the latest Estyn report –
<p>Link to the report -</p>

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS

SELF EVALUATION

How often do you undertake a Review/Self Evaluation of your Safeguarding systems?	
How often are safeguarding policies reviewed and updated?	
How do you ensure that safeguarding is a priority across all levels of leadership and governance?	
How does the school ensure that safeguarding remains a key focus in strategic planning and day-to-day operations?	

EXTERNAL CHECKS

<p>Have there been any external checks in relation to your safeguarding processes and procedures and what were the results?</p> <p>Were there matters requiring further development?</p>	
--	--

TRAINING AND UNDERSTANDING

Can you describe how the school tracks and ensures that all staff have received the appropriate training in accordance with the All-Wales Safeguarding Procedures ?	
Have other stakeholders e.g. governors, catering staff, received training at the appropriate level?	
How do you ensure that new staff understand the school's safeguarding procedures?	

RAISING AWARENESS

Are there age-appropriate curricular opportunities for learners in relation to safeguarding? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Is there work presented on personal safety, on-line safety, healthy relationships, mental health, rights and responsibilities and how to seek help if they experience harm?</i>○ <i>How do you go about ensuring that learners' voices are part of the conversation about safeguarding?</i>○ <i>Do you have plans/good practice in place that can be shared with others in relation to safeguarding?</i>	
What steps do you take to ensure that learners, staff and parents know how to report safeguarding concerns confidentially and without fear of repercussions?	

SITE / SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

<p>Do you have an up-to-date risk assessment of the site and robust site safety arrangements that are understood and implemented by staff and learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Were any shortcomings found in your most recent assessment?</i>○ <i>What has been done/needs to be done in response?</i>	
<p>What arrangements do you have in place to ensure safety –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>during times when the breakfast club and after-school clubs are held?</i>○ <i>when the community uses the site outside of core school hours?</i>	

RECRUITING AND MANAGING STAFF

<p>Has the school adopted the Council's Human Resources Policies and procedures in relation to staff recruitment and management, including vetting procedures?</p>	
<p>How do you ensure that safe recruitment procedures are in place?</p>	

WORKING WITH OTHERS

<p>How do you work with other agencies in relation to child protection concerns? As a Headteacher, where could you go for support?</p>	
--	--

Questions - visits

Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) or Second Designated Safeguarding Person if the Headteacher is the DSP

1. How robust is safeguarding in your school and how do you know?
 - What are your biggest strengths and concerns? Do you trust the system?
2. Have any issues emerged following your latest review?
 - What were they, and what have you done about those issues?
3. What are your arrangements for recording safeguarding concerns?
 - How do you monitor and ensure that record-keeping in relation to safeguarding issues is effective and of quality? (*Clear, accurate, and timely documentation of concerns, actions taken, and decisions made, ensuring confidentiality and accessibility*)
 - Where do you keep the information about safeguarding concerns?
4. Considering confidentiality, describe how the school successfully responded to a safeguarding incident
5. How do you remind learners of the safeguarding procedures and who to contact if they have any concerns?
6. How do you ensure that all members of staff understand what safeguarding is and how to raise a concern?
7. How do you engage with parents/guardians in terms of safeguarding and encourage them to be involved in safeguarding their children?
8. What are your views on the quality of Local Authority support, e.g. the Department of Education and Social Services support?
 - Are you confident that you are getting a timely and useful response?
9. Are there any aspects of safeguarding that could be improved?

Teaching Staff

1. How are staff/Are staff made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities?
 - How often do you get the opportunity to discuss issues?
2. What happens when a pupil is absent?
3. Can you talk me through what you would do if a learner made a disclosure?
 - What would happen in your school? Do you get any feedback?
 - Any support? Do you trust the system?
4. If you were concerned about the professional conduct of a staff member/Headteacher/Governor, what would be the best way to deal with it?
 - How confident would you be in doing this?
5. Are there any aspects of safeguarding that could be improved?

Ancillary staff

1. How are staff/Are staff made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities?
 - How often do you get the opportunity to discuss issues?
2. Can you talk me through what you would do if a learner made a disclosure?
 - What would happen in your school? Do you get any feedback?
 - Any support? Do you trust the system?
3. If you were concerned about the professional conduct of a staff member/Headteacher/Governor, what would be the best way of dealing with it?
 - How confident would you be in doing this?
4. Are there any aspects of safeguarding that could be improved?

Governors including the Chairperson and the Designated Safeguarding Governor

1. Can you explain the role of the Governing Body in reviewing and overseeing safeguarding practices in your school?
2. How often is safeguarding discussed at Governors' meetings?
 - How do you monitor and review safeguarding arrangements?
3. Have any issues emerged following your latest review?
 - What were they, and what have you done about those issues?
4. What is the Governor/School relationship? Give an example of how you challenge in terms of safeguarding.
5. How robust is safeguarding in your school and how do you know?
 - What are your biggest strengths and concerns?
 - Do you trust the system?
6. How, as Governors, do you ensure that safe recruitment procedures are in place?
7. What are your views on the quality of Local Authority support, e.g. the support from the Education Department and Social Services?
 - Are you confident that you are getting a timely and useful response?
8. Are there any aspects of safeguarding that could be improved?

Headteacher

1. How do you monitor attendance and absence?
 - Do you consider your response to be timely and appropriate?
2. How do you remind learners of the safeguarding procedures and who to contact should they have any concern?
3. How do you engage with parents/guardians in terms of safeguarding and encourage them to be involved in safeguarding their children?
4. How are staff made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities?
 - How often do you discuss safeguarding issues with staff?
5. How do you ensure that all members of staff understand what safeguarding is and how to raise a concern?
6. How robust is safeguarding in your school and how do you know?
 - What are your biggest strengths and concerns?
 - Do you trust the system?
7. Have any issues emerged following your latest review?
 - What were they, and what have you done about those issues?
8. What are your arrangements for recording safeguarding concerns?
 - How do you monitor and ensure that record-keeping in relation to safeguarding issues is effective and of quality? (*Clear, accurate, and timely documentation of concerns, actions taken, and decisions made, ensuring confidentiality and accessibility*)
 - Where do you keep the information about safeguarding concerns
9. Considering confidentiality, describe how the school successfully responded to a safeguarding incident
10. What are your views on the quality of Local Authority support, e.g. the support from the Education Department and Social Services?
 - Are you confident that you are getting a timely and useful response?
11. Are there any aspects of safeguarding that could be improved?

SAFEGUARDING ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

The general atmosphere of the school is also a good indicator of how safe people feel.

Consider the physical environment and protocols for visitors. These measures alone are not enough to justify the sense of security. You should consider how the ethos and atmosphere of the school demonstrate a culture of safeguarding and an appropriate level of care for all learners.

Area to consider	Evidence/Your comments
<p>Access Arrangements</p> <p><i>safe ways of arrival and exit, gates and doors that are secure and monitored.</i></p>	
<p>Visitor arrival and exit procedures</p> <p><i>Confirm that all visitors are required to log in and wear an identification badge.</i></p>	
<p>Adequate staff supervision</p> <p><i>Check that children are properly supervised during breaks, lunchtime, and other unsupervised times.</i></p>	
<p>Visible safeguarding information</p> <p><i>Check that safeguarding policies, procedures and links are easily accessible to staff and visitors.</i></p> <p><i>Identify the Designated Safeguarding Person and ensure that their contact details are visible and known.</i></p>	
<p>Physical Environment</p> <p><i>Well-maintained and clean facilities: Look for any signs of damage that could create hazards (e.g. loose floor tiles, broken fences).</i></p>	
<p>Secure boundaries</p> <p><i>Confirm that outdoor play areas are securely fenced and that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised.</i></p>	
<p>Emergency exits and procedures</p> <p><i>Check that emergency exits are clearly marked and accessible, and that fire alarms are in good working condition.</i></p>	
<p>Clear signage</p> <p><i>Ensure there is appropriate signage for evacuation routes, first aid locations, and safeguarding information.</i></p>	
<p>ANYTHING ELSE THAT IS RELEVANT</p>	

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE END/FOLLOWING THE VISIT IN RELATION TO YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE ORGANISATION'S CULTURE

Area to consider	Evidence/Your comments
<p>From the discussions/information presented to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ are you assured that the Headteacher/Senior Management Team/Chair of Governors has a robust understanding of what SAFEGUARDING entails? and how to respond to any allegations/concerns from staff and learners? 	
<p>From your discussions with school staff, are you assured that <i>safeguarding is everyone's responsibility?</i></p>	
<p>From your discussions with school staff, are you confident that they have the skills to identify early signs of abuse, understand child protection protocols, and know how to respond to disclosures?</p> <p>Do staff refer to the Safeguarding Policies and Procedures?</p>	
<p>From the discussions/information presented to you, is the relationship between the school and the Council robust, open and is there effective communication between them?</p>	
<p>From the discussions are you assured that there are positive relationships between staff and between staff and learners in place in the school?</p>	
<p>Walking around the school, did you notice any issues of concern in relation to the building/site e.g. external doors open, entrances to the site open, toilets...</p>	
<p><i>ANYTHING ELSE THAT IS RELEVANT</i></p>	



Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools

Pupil Voice Report

Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies

May 2026

Introduction

Independent evaluation commissioned to explore pupil voices on safeguarding arrangements in Gwynedd schools

Part of the wider Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee review and Cyngor Gwynedd safeguarding response plan

Report identifies key strengths, pupil experiences and areas for development in safeguarding awareness and pupil voice across schools

Purpose of the Evaluation

Explore	Explore pupils' understanding of safeguarding arrangements in schools
---------	---

Understand	Understand how children and young people raise concerns and access support
------------	--

Examine	Examine whether pupils feel safe, listened to and supported
---------	---

Support	Support Cyngor Gwynedd's wider safeguarding review
---------	--

Background

- Children and young people have a right to be involved in safeguarding discussions (UNCRC Article 12)
- Welsh legislation and guidance support pupil voice in safeguarding processes (Welsh Government, 2022)
- Effective safeguarding includes children feeling safe, listened to and able to access support (Estyn, 2022)
- Disclosure can be difficult due to fear, shame, confidentiality concerns and worries about not being believed (Cossar et al., 2013)
- Trusted adults and supportive relationships help children seek support (Abdul Latiff et al., 2023)
- Schools are key settings for identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns (Cossar et al., 2013)
- Emotional safety, privacy and clear communication strengthen access to support (Nohilly and Treacy, 2024)
- Limited research exists on how pupils experience safeguarding systems within schools
- Gathering pupil voice helps assess whether safeguarding arrangements are visible, accessible and supportive in practice

Methodology

Focus groups undertaken in May 2026

57 children and young people participated

Primary pupils: Years 3–6

Secondary pupils: Years 7–9 and Gwynedd Youth Forum

Welsh language, age-appropriate and ethically informed discussions

Key Findings: Overall

Safeguarding experienced through relationships and school culture

Trusted adults and emotional safety were central themes

Wellbeing, fairness and belonging strongly linked to feeling safe

Pupils valued approachable and emotionally responsive staff

Primary School: Key Themes

3.1 Understanding safety and safeguarding

Strong age-appropriate understanding of physical, emotional and online safety

3.2 Emotional wellbeing and accessing support

Strong awareness of emotional wellbeing and the importance of talking about worries

3.3 Trusted adults and relationships

Trusted adults and supportive relationships central to feeling safe and supported

3.4 Raising concerns and access to support

Multiple accessible pathways for raising concerns, including worry boxes and pastoral support

3.5 Visibility of safeguarding information

Safeguarding information highly visible, accessible and child-friendly across the school

3.6 External agencies and safety education

Positive impact of police, PCSOs and preventative safeguarding education

3.7 Peer support and helping friends

Strong peer empathy and encouragement to seek help from trusted adults

3.8 Overall summary

Safeguarding experienced as part of a wider culture of care, wellbeing and emotional support

Primary School Findings

Strong awareness of safety, wellbeing and support pathways

Trusted adults and pastoral support highly valued

Worry boxes and visual safeguarding information seen positively

Strong awareness of online safety and bullying

Peer support and empathy evident across groups

Primary School Strengths

Visible pastoral support and trusted adults

Accessible safeguarding communication

Strong emotional wellbeing awareness

Preventative education from schools and police

Multiple routes to access support

Primary School: Areas to Develop

- Provide clearer explanations about what happens after a concern is shared
- Strengthen pupil understanding of confidentiality and follow-up support
- Continue developing awareness of how to access specialist services and support
- Maintain consistent communication about safeguarding processes across the school
- Continue strengthening online safety education as pupils become older
- Further support pupils to understand how adults respond to safeguarding concerns
- Continue promoting accessible and inclusive safeguarding information for all pupils
- Maintain ongoing opportunities for pupil voice and feedback on wellbeing and safeguarding arrangements

Secondary School: Key Themes

4.1 Relationships and Emotional Safety

Safeguarding experienced primarily through trusted relationships, emotional safety and supportive staff

4.2 Trusted Adults and Visibility of Support

Importance of choice, approachable staff and visible support systems across school

4.3 Emotional Wellbeing and Safeguarding

Strong links between safeguarding, emotional wellbeing, stress and mental health support

4.4 Behaviour Systems and Fairness

Fairness, consistency and clear communication within behaviour systems affected emotional safety and trust

4.5 External Safeguarding Education

Pupils valued practical, realistic and discussion-based safeguarding education

4.6 Vaping, Toilets and Peer Behaviours

Concerns around vaping, peer pressure, unsafe spaces and the importance of peer support and participation

4.7 Overall Summary


Safeguarding understood as a relational, emotional and whole-school culture issue rather than procedures alone

Secondary School Findings

Safeguarding linked closely to emotional wellbeing



Wellbeing spaces such as Hafan and Noddfa highly valued



Pupils valued fairness, consistency and restorative communication



Questions raised around confidentiality and follow-up support



Behaviour systems impacted emotional safety

Secondary School Challenges

Concerns about inconsistent behaviour systems

Vaping and feeling unsafe in toilets

Uncertainty around referral processes

Need for clearer communication after disclosures

Some safeguarding education viewed as inconsistent

Secondary School: Strengths

- Strong relationships between pupils and trusted adults
- Pupils felt emotionally supported, listened to and respected
- Wellbeing spaces such as “Hafan” and “Noddfa” viewed very positively
- Good visibility of safeguarding support, posters and trusted staff
- Strong awareness of emotional wellbeing and mental health support
- Pupils valued practical and discussion-based safeguarding education
- Positive pupil awareness of online safety, relationships and peer pressure
- Strong peer support, empathy and encouragement to seek help
- Opportunities for pupil voice and participation valued by young people
- Safeguarding experienced as part of a wider culture of care, wellbeing and emotional safety

What Pupils Said

“If you keep it in, the backpack gets heavier and heavier.”

“People help you when things are difficult.”

“Negatives don’t help.”

“You can write it on paper if you don’t want to say it.”

Key Strengths

Visible pastoral support

Trusted staff

Wellbeing spaces

Preventative safeguarding education

Peer support

Summary

Primary pupils focused more on practical safety and trusted relationships

Secondary pupils showed greater awareness of fairness, behaviour systems, consistency and school culture

Older pupils wanted greater clarity around confidentiality, referral pathways and follow-up support

Findings highlight the importance of relational and emotionally informed safeguarding approaches

Effective safeguarding depends on support being visible, accessible, fair and responsive to children and young people's wellbeing needs

Conclusion

Safeguarding is experienced as relational and holistic

Children value trusted relationships and emotional safety

Visible support systems increase confidence in accessing support

Fairness, belonging and wellbeing are key safeguarding themes

Strengths and Limitations

Rich qualitative
insight from pupil
voice

Broad age range
across educational
settings

Small qualitative
sample limits
generalisability

No Year 10–13
participants due
to exam pressures

Recommendations

7.1 Continue to strengthen relational informed safeguarding practice

Strengthen relationship-based safeguarding and access to trusted adults

7.2 Improve clarity around safeguarding pathways and access to support

Improve communication around confidentiality, referral pathways and follow-up support

7.3 Continue to strengthen wellbeing spaces and pastoral support

Maintain and develop accessible wellbeing spaces and early emotional support

7.4 Continue developing age-appropriate safeguarding education

Deliver practical, discussion-based safeguarding education on current issues

7.5 Strengthen pupil voice and participation in safeguarding development

Embed pupil voice within safeguarding review and school improvement processes

7.6 Review behaviour systems

Strengthen fairness, consistency and communication within behaviour systems

7.7 Strengthen support around peer safeguarding

Provide clearer guidance around peer support, boundaries and help-seeking

7.8 Regularly review safeguarding arrangements

Continue regular safeguarding reviews that actively include pupil voice across all age groups

Thank You

- Thank you to all children and young people who participated
- Thanks to participating schools and Gwynedd Youth Forum
- Questions/reflections

References

- Abdul Latiff, L., Tajik, E., Ibrahim, N., Abubakar, A. and Ali, S.S.S. (2023) 'Barriers and facilitators to child disclosure of abuse in institutional settings: A systematic review', *Child Abuse Review*, 32(4), pp. 1–17.
- Cossar, J., Brandon, M., Bailey, S., Belderson, P., Biggart, L. and Sharpe, D. (2013) 'It takes a lot to build trust': Recognition and telling: Developing earlier routes to help for children and young people. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.
- Estyn (2022) *Inspection framework guidance: Safeguarding and child protection*. Cardiff: Estyn.
- Nohilly, M. and Treacy, D. (2024) 'School climate, emotional safety and help-seeking behaviours in educational safeguarding contexts', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 158, 107409.
- Welsh Government (2022) *Keeping learners safe: The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.