

Scrutiny Investigation Report into Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools

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Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.



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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

Safeguarding children and young people is among the most important responsibilities of schools, local authorities and communities. Ensuring an effective safeguarding procedure is not just a matter of policy compliance, but a commitment to creating a culture where every child feels safe, listened to and knows who to turn to when they need help. As important as policies, procedures and training are, an open culture where people feel confident to raise concerns, where leaders listen and act, and where lessons are continually learned, is what makes those arrangements work effectively.

This investigation was carried out with a constructive spirit, with the intention of understanding how safeguarding arrangements operate in practice in Gwynedd and to identify opportunities to strengthen them. Throughout the work, we received evidence from officers, experts, headteachers, staff, governors and, most importantly, input from children and young people who attend our schools.

Much of what we saw was encouraging. We saw schools where pupils' well-being and safety are at the heart of day-to-day work, with dedicated staff and conscientious governors working tirelessly to create safe and supportive environments. That deserves to be recognised and praised.

At the same time, the investigation showed that there were opportunities to further strengthen arrangements. The recommendations in the report focus on areas such as training, information sharing, supporting governors, listening to pupils' voice and ensuring that concerns are recorded and considered in a way that enables risk patterns to be identified before harm occurs.

I am particularly pleased that the voice of children and young people has played an important role in this work. Their perspectives have reminded us that trust, approachable adults and clear communication are the foundations of effective safeguarding.

I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues on the investigation, the officers who supported us, the external consultant, the schools and all the individuals who contributed evidence and time to this work. Without their cooperation and willingness to share their experiences, the investigation would not have been possible.

I hope that the report will make a positive contribution to strengthening safeguarding arrangements in Gwynedd and help ensure that all children and young people are able to learn and develop in an environment where they feel safe, respected and heard.

**Councillor Cai Larsen,
Chair of the Investigation**

1. Recommendations

Staff and Governor Training

1. That training at the appropriate level should be held annually for all staff and governors and that the number of staff in schools completing the higher level training should be increased.
2. That the Education Department adapt its training slides to include one specific slide at the start of the training which includes specific contact phone numbers and email addresses so that staff can print them and keep them safe.
3. The safeguarding training should be even clearer, in that staff should refer any concern to the Designated Safeguarding Person or Deputy Safeguarding Person immediately and not investigate or make the decision for themselves whether the matter reaches the threshold. Staff should be reminded of this continually.
4. The Education Department should ensure that all Governing bodies are aware of the specific action to be taken when there is a safeguarding complaint against the Headteacher and the support available to them, ensuring appropriate and adequate support for the Governors in such cases.

Pupils' Understanding

5. That there is a need to continue to develop age and ability appropriate safeguarding education that reflects current issues affecting children and young people.
6. All schools should formalise the arrangements of sending a regular questionnaire to pupils to ask them whether they know where and to whom to turn in a safeguarding case.
7. Schools should communicate clearly, and in an age and ability appropriate manner, with pupils about confidentiality, safeguarding processes, referral routes, follow-up support and access to specialist well-being services.

Support for pupils

8. Schools should continue to invest in safe well-being spaces that pupils can use flexibly and without stigma, alongside visible pastoral support that promotes emotional well-being and early intervention.
9. Schools should continue to strengthen relationship-based safeguarding approaches, ensuring that all pupils have access to trusted adults who are visible, approachable and responsive to their needs
10. Schools should, where appropriate, continue to strengthen methods of peer support and provide clearer guidance around confidentiality, boundaries and when support from eligible adults is needed.

Pupils' Voice

11. Schools should strengthen mechanisms of listening to pupils' voice when developing and monitoring safeguarding arrangements through methods such as school councils, well-being groups, pupil surveys and regular consultation exercises.

Review of Safeguarding Arrangements

12. Schools and the Education Department should continue to undertake regular reviews of safeguarding arrangements in schools that include the voices of children and young people of all ages and abilities.
13. Schools and the Education Department should monitor any risk patterns and learn lessons as part of the regular safeguarding monitoring. It should be ensured that the lessons learned are shared across schools and relevant services.

Information Sharing, Recording of Safeguarding Matters and Systems

14. All schools in Gwynedd should be operating on the recording system (Bromcom) which is funded by the Education Department to record safeguarding matters about a child. It must be ensured that the information is fed into the system by default and that necessary information is shared easily and in a timely manner with relevant professional officers (including Social Services).

15. That one core electronic information form be developed, which extracts information from all systems in order to share necessary information between schools in a timely manner.
16. Call on the Welsh Government to fund a single system for all schools in Wales to ensure that information about safeguarding matters is passed on easily with children and young people as they move from school to school.
17. Call on the Welsh Government to develop a formal system to record and monitor patterns of suspicious behaviour, which do not meet the referral threshold, so that Social Services can consider an individual's suitability to work with children.

Increasing Parents' Understanding and include them in Safeguarding Arrangements

18. That the Education Department develop a consistent procedure regarding how schools can explain safeguarding processes to parents and how to include them in safeguarding arrangements.

Visibility of Safeguarding Information in schools

19. That all schools adapt their lanyards for staff, to include (on the back) the information necessary for contacting the Referrals Team and the telephone number of the Designated Safeguarding Person so that it is easy for staff to obtain the relevant telephone numbers immediately.
20. That all schools produce clear and age and ability appropriate posters, displaying photographs of the Designated Safeguarding Person and the Designated Safeguarding Governor, and place them in suitable places.
21. That schools create a dedicated space to display safeguarding information with input from pupils including placing a box where pupils can raise a concern.

School Governing Bodies and Accountability of School Headteachers

22. To recommend to the Welsh Government that there is a need to review the role of School Governing Bodies, and the line management (accountability) of School Headteachers.

See page 28 onwards for more information.

2. Introduction

- 2.1** The safeguarding arrangements in schools were scrutinised at the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee 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.
- 2.2** At the Committee's informal meeting on 9 January 2025, a draft brief was considered for the scrutiny investigation. The members of the Committee welcomed the intention to carry out an investigation and to do so in a constructive manner, making beneficial recommendations based on evidence.
- 2.3** The Scrutiny Forum (a meeting of scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs), has a role to advise on the prioritisation of scrutiny investigations within the context of the resources available. At the meeting of the Forum on 29 January 2025, consideration was given to the draft brief and the investigation was prioritised.
- 2.4** The investigation brief was adopted at the meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on [13 February 2025](#). After members were elected at the meeting, two members withdrew for various reasons. The members who have been undertaking the work of the investigation are:
- o Councillors Cai Larsen (Chair), Dawn Lynne Jones, Gwynfor Owen and Richard Glyn Roberts.
 - o Co-opted Member - Sharon Roberts (Parent/Governor Representative for Arfon)
- 2.5** The scrutiny investigation has been included in the Council's Response to Offending Plan. The Response Plan was adopted at the Cabinet meeting on 21 January 2025. The Response Plan is a live plan that is reviewed regularly. See more information about the Response Plan and the Child Practice Review report 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' on [the Council's website](#).
- 2.6** An updated investigation brief can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

3. Background

3.1 The statutory guidance "[Keeping learners safe](#)" (Welsh Government, March 2022) provides guidance to local authorities and school governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children under the Education Act 2002. The guidance relates directly to the safeguarding procedures and duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

3.2 The guidance states:

“Safeguarding is preventing and protecting children from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm, and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers. Safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all children attending an education setting is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- o protecting children from risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm
- o preventing impairment of children's health or development
- o ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- o taking action to enable all children to achieve the best outcomes." ¹

3.3 The guidance does not set out detailed procedures. It is noted that it:

“... aims to specify the outcomes that organisations need to secure to enable staff to meet the objective of keeping children safe from harm as well as what needs to be done, or put in place, to achieve this." ²

3.4 The guidance outlines and details responsibilities in relation to safeguarding arrangements in schools. In response to a request from members of the investigation, Gareth Morgans (External Consultant) produced a document outlining the responsibilities of different stakeholders in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people. The document assisted the members in undertaking the work of the investigation. The document can be viewed at **Appendix 2**.

¹Welsh Government, *Keeping learners safe* (March 2022) - <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-04/220401-keeping-learners-safe.pdf>, 3

²Welsh Government, *Keeping learners safe* (March 2022) - <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-04/220401-keeping-learners-safe.pdf>, 5

4. Meetings

- 4.1** The investigation looked at the Council's current arrangements in relation to safeguarding in schools and the arrangements in a sample of schools.
- 4.2** Four meetings of the Investigation were held between March 2025 and April 2025. At the first meeting, the members familiarised themselves with the brief and there was a discussion on how it could be ensured that pupils understood how to raise a concern and with whom to contact. Consideration was given to the different ways of hearing the pupils' voice, such as speaking directly with pupils, via a questionnaire, consider information from the quality check visits held by the Education Department and information from Estyn inspections. It was decided to consider the best course of action as the investigation proceeded.
- 4.3** A presentation was given on the legal context for safeguarding in schools by the Legal Services Manager.
- 4.4** It was intended to select schools to be included in the sample of schools that the members would visit at the first meeting. The following factors were considered when selecting schools to be included in the sample: schools of varying sizes, different areas and a mix of urban and rural schools, as well as consideration to the timing of their latest Estyn inspections.
- 4.5** During the discussion, the need to receive information about the number of referrals per pupil per school was highlighted, in order for members of the investigation to consider this factor as well when selecting schools, noting that examples of a high number and a low number of referrals were needed. It was concluded that members of the investigation would select the schools for the sample after receiving this information.
- 4.6** At the second meeting, a presentation was given by the Education Department's Safeguarding and Well-being Quality Lead on schools' safeguarding arrangements. The Head of Department as well as the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Officer were present also to respond to members' questions. An explanation was given of what support was available by the Education Department on safeguarding

arrangements in schools, elaborating on the training, annual questionnaire, Safeguarding Arrangements Audit and the resources available for the schools to raise awareness of the arrangements among staff and pupils. Following the meeting, examples were shared of posters to raise pupils' awareness of what they should do to raise a concern.

4.7 Officers from the Children and Supporting Families Department joined later in the meeting. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality and the Referrals Team Manager were present to discuss the collaboration between schools/Education Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department. It was noted that a lack of information and accuracy in referrals can be challenging for the Referrals Team, but discussions were being held with the Education Department to seek to identify and overcome these obstacles. It was explained that the restructuring within the Education Department means that the Safeguarding and Well-being Teams in the Education Department could advise officers from the schools before they referred matters to the Referrals Team in the Children and Supporting Families Department.

4.8 Consideration was given to the next steps and it was decided which schools to include in the sample. The following is a list of the schools it was decided to visit:

Primary (6)	Ysgol Garndolbenmaen, Llanllechid, Maenofferen, Nefyn, Rhiwlas, Tanygrisiau
Secondary (3)	Ysgol Glan y Môr, Tryfan, Tywyn
Special (1)	Ysgol Pendalar
All-through (1)	Ysgol Bro Idris (the main site, the Dinas Mawddwy site and the Llanelltyd site)

4.9 Gareth Morgans, an independent external expert in the field, was appointed to assist members of the investigation. He has extensive experience of safeguarding arrangements in schools and worked as Director of Education and Children's Services at Carmarthenshire County Council until his retirement. He was present at the third meeting and a representative of Estyn was invited to the meeting to give Estyn's view on the authority's arrangements. Members were given an opportunity to ask for more

information in order to have a better understanding of the Estyn inspection arrangements.

4.10 The External Consultant and the Estyn Assistant Director elaborated on good practice in terms of safeguarding arrangements at schools. The following themes were highlighted:

- o Robust culture of safeguarding and pupil welfare
- o Suitable training
- o Safe learning spaces
- o Vigilance and support for pupils
- o Clear policies and procedures
- o Response to wider threats
- o Voice the opinion (of pupils and teachers)
- o Effective self-evaluation

4.11 At the fourth meeting of the investigation, information about the safeguarding arrangements of the schools in the sample was considered. A report was submitted which included:

- o a selection of information from the most recent Estyn report, as well as a link to the full report;
- o information about the schools' Safeguarding Children Policy as well as notes from exceptions; and
- o a summary of responses to the 2023/24 safeguarding annual questionnaire by the sample schools.

4.12 The need to have a context sheet for each school was highlighted so that members were aware of the relevant information before visiting the schools. See school context sheet template at **Appendix 3**.

4.13 A list of possible questions was presented by Gareth Morgans, the external consultant, emphasising that all of the information set out above was also an important key context to consider and remember before going on any school visit.

4.14 The need to maintain consistency for the questions to the different schools in the sample was confirmed, while acknowledging that the follow-up questions would vary

somewhat from school to school. The questions were discussed and following the comments the questions were summarised and refined.

- 4.15** It was decided to share some of the questions with the schools in advance. The questions shared in advance are at **Appendix 4**. With the questions asked at the visits at **Appendix 5**.
- 4.16** The need to create a school environment and culture checklist was identified. See at **Appendix 6** the checklist compiled by the external consultant to enable members to note comments when touring the schools and their impressions at the end of the visits.
- 4.17** A representation of the members of the investigation (minimum of two members) as well as the Lead or Support Officer visited the 11 schools in the sample during May – July 2025. See more information about the visits on page 15. The visits allowed members of the investigation to gather evidence directly from school staff and governors.
- 4.18** At the fifth meeting of the investigation, there was a discussion about members' initial impressions following visits to the schools.
- 4.19** The sixth meeting of the investigation was held in September, findings arising from the visits were discussed and possible recommendations were considered. In addition, attention was paid to the commissioning of a provider to complete the work of hearing pupils' voices. The steps taken to identify a potential provider were detailed and information was shared about options received from one provider to complete the work. It was reported that the provider could deliver the work in December 2025.
- 4.20** At the seventh meeting of the investigation, there was a discussion with officers from the Children and Supporting Families Department. The Acting Head of the Children's Department, Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality and a Referrals Officer were present. There was a discussion about issues that had arisen as a result of visits to the schools which the members of the investigation wished to question further.
- 4.21** It was reported at the meeting that the provider identified to carry out the work to hear the pupils' voice had been in touch stating that they considered the sample was

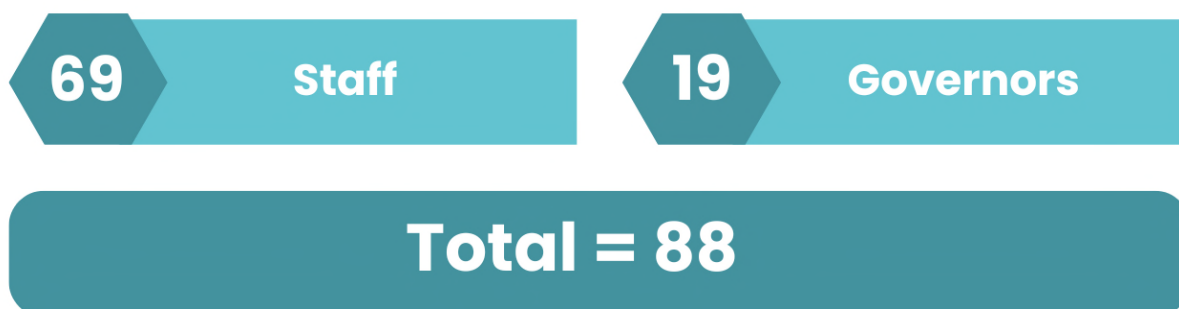
insufficient. Consideration was given to the next steps taking into account the context and brief of the investigation. It was agreed to contact the provider asking them to carry out the work in accordance with the original brief. A response was received from the provider that they could not carry out the work on this basis but that they were willing to discuss. As a result, it was decided to move on to look for another provider to carry out the work on the basis required in order to carry out the work of the investigation.

- 4.22** At the eighth meeting of the investigation, there was a conversation about human resources matters. The Head of Corporate Services and the Human Resources Advisory Team Leader were in attendance. They set the context for HR work in relation to schools. It was explained that matters that arise are the responsibility of the schools, but that the Human Resources Service is available to offer support and guidance. Members of the investigation had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss possible scenarios with the officers.
- 4.23** At the ninth meeting, members had a conversation with the Head of Education and the Quality Lead for Safeguarding and Well-being about the collaborative relationship between the Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department and about issues of assessing an individual's suitability to work with children.
- 4.24** Members considered possible recommendations arising from the investigation meetings keeping in mind the possible recommendations drawn up following the visits to the schools.
- 4.25** It was confirmed at the meeting that Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies had been appointed to complete the work of hearing pupils' voices, with the intention of completing the work by the end of May 2026.
- 4.26** The work was completed in line with the schedule and a presentation on the work was received on 8 June. Members of the Response Board were invited to attend in order to hear the findings and recommendations arising from the work. Appreciation of the presentation and the opportunity to attend were noted. A copy of the presentation is at **Appendix 7**. Details of this work are on page 24.

- 4.27** At the tenth meeting of the investigation, members of the investigation discussed all possible recommendations including those arising from the pupils' voice work. Possible modifications and changes to the recommendations were identified.
- 4.28** At the final meeting of the investigation, the final draft report of the investigation was discussed with the Cabinet Member for Education and the Head of Education as well as the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families and the Head of Children and Supporting Families.

5. School Visits

- 5.1** A representation of the members of the investigation (minimum of two members) as well as the Lead Officer or Support Officer visited the 11 schools in the sample during May, June and July 2025.
- 5.2** The visits to each school lasted at least half a day with a visit to the All-through School involving a visit to the main site and two other sites.
- 5.3** Informal open conversations were held with Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Persons (DPPs), Designated Safeguarding Deputies, Teachers, Support Staff as well as Chairs and Designated Safeguarding and Governors. The questions that formed the basis of the conversations can be found at **Appendix 5**.
- 5.4** During all the visits members talked with:



- 5.5** The number who took part by sector:



- 5.6** As well as holding conversations, members took note of the schools' environment and culture of safeguarding and noted comments on the checklist. At the end of the visits members discussed their impressions and a table was completed which was on the same sheet as the checklist. See document at **Appendix 6**.

5.7 The welcome received from the schools and the open discussions which gave members an insight into how safeguarding arrangements are implemented in practice in schools were greatly appreciated.

5.8 The main findings arising from the visits under specific themes were:

Safeguarding

- o A procedure for reporting safeguarding matters seemed to be on the staff's fingertips at all levels and clear recording arrangements with constant communication about this in the schools.
- o Safeguarding arrangements in a special school are extremely important, but communication with each pupil is a challenge due to the nature of the needs – often a 'concern' or incident is shown in the children's behaviour rather than a specific disclosure.
- o Staff across schools are aware that smaller issues that arise need to be recorded and kept in mind as a pattern could become obvious which might potentially lead to a safeguarding matter.
- o Staff know how to respond to a disclosure by a pupil. In one primary school, some members of staff were found to have a vague understanding of the arrangements with Social Services.
- o Arrangements in some schools where staff record the concern and go to the DSP, phone call or email to note that they have recorded a concern. When the matter is serious/there is a risk to the child, the understanding is to approach the DSP or a member of the school's Safeguarding Team.
- o Staff generally receive feedback following reporting a safeguarding concern. The feedback ranges from knowing that the concern is being dealt with, to knowing the action that has been taken in response, to getting confirmation of the outcome.
- o Safeguarding matters are discussed at weekly staff meetings. Robust arrangements in secondary schools with the Safeguarding Team discussing

concerns (new and continuing) and putting in place a plan in terms of action to be taken in response to the concern.

Matters under the safeguarding threshold

- o More matters below the threshold are regularly arising in schools. These matters take up the time of the school/Headteacher as they need to be responded to (can be a challenge in small schools).
- o Many employees/agencies are involved with welfare needs. It was noted that more joined up thinking is needed as the provision at present is fragmented.
- o Frustration has been noted by 2 primary schools and 1 secondary school that the school receives guidance to speak to parents about matters below the threshold. It was noted that it is difficult when a parent does not want to know about the matter and that it can affect the relationship with the school.
- o It was noted at one secondary school that it was easier for the school to make contact with the parents because the relationship already existed. It worked well with non-safeguarding matters.

Systems

- o 9 schools had an electronic system to record concerns, 1 primary school had an electronic system and paper forms (scanning the forms into the system) and 1 primary school had a paper filing system.
- o 8 schools use MyConcern including a secondary school that uses it and the Provision Map system as well. One secondary school uses Microsoft Forms and the other secondary school uses ClassChart and the 'Meetings Log' in the Provision Map system (both systems speak to each other).
- o Different recording and tracking systems in schools can lead to shortcomings when sharing information easily about pupils/individuals moving from school to school.

Observations were noted in the secondary schools and the all-through school relating to pupils transferring from another school or council area. It was noted that the information was slow in reaching schools.

Reference was also made to the efficiency of transferring information from primary to secondary school. It was noted that due to different systems it was not possible to transfer the information automatically.

In addition, concerns were raised about securing information about children who remained pupils in a school in Gwynedd but had had to flee temporarily for their safety to another council. Getting up-to-date information about them was a challenge.

Training

- o Safeguarding training will take place on the 'In Service Training (INSET)' day in early September, with all school staff in attendance (including assistants and support staff) in 8 schools.
- o Safeguarding training will take place on INSET day in early September, with all school educational staff in attendance, and separate training will be held for support staff at the other three schools. It was stated in one school that there is an intention to change this for September 2025.
- o 2 schools have specifically stated that they are holding a refresher of the training/reminding staff on INSET days during the year.
- o Good practice for schools with more than one site – 2 people at each site have received level 2 training and are qualified to deal with safeguarding matters.
- o A Designated Safeguarding Governor who had completed the level 2 training stated that the opportunity to work through different scenarios as part of the training would be beneficial and would enhance the training.
- o School arrangements for training supply staff vary.

Governors

- o Governors take the responsibility for safeguarding seriously and generally regularly challenge the Headteacher about safeguarding matters (and site safety) ensuring that the Headteacher acts on their recommendations.

- o Governors are an important part of safeguarding arrangements. Reviews policies annually and keeps in mind that the policies need to be practical and help the Headteacher/Staff to fulfil their role.
- o Matters relating to safeguarding are mentioned at each full meeting of the governing body. Safeguarding is a specific item on the agenda for some and others not.
- o The pressure and responsibility of the role of Governors – a feeling of being 'out of their depth' with the expectations and responsibilities, bearing in mind that they are lay people. Even harder when receiving a complaint/dealing with a matter, and not really knowing where to turn if the allegation is about the Headteacher.
- o Members of the governing body who have a background in areas relating to safeguarding and/or education are helpful and provide reassurance to the school and other governors when discussing safeguarding matters.
- o Similarly, staff who are governors speak from experience and feed information to the governing body.
- o Examples of Designated Safeguarding Governors discussing safeguarding matters one-to-one with the Headteacher.

Staff

- o All staff take the responsibility seriously and point out that they are there for the children and that they are of utmost important. Stated that they would report immediately on any concern. While acknowledging that if it involved another member of staff or the Headteacher it would not be easy but the matter would have to be raised.
- o At one school, it was noted that staff would discuss among themselves if they were unsure whether or not to report a concern. Room to ensure that the safeguarding training is absolutely clear that the matter should be referred to the DSP if there is any concern.
- o Staff sometimes do not differentiate as to when they would contact the Education Safeguarding Team or the Referrals Team.

- o Appointments in the schools following the Education Department's guidance including carrying out DBS checks and recording them.

Parents

- o Communication in relation to safeguarding matters varies from school to school.
- o The secondary schools refer to a safeguarding questionnaire being sent to parents. An opportunity to note if their child feels safe at school, any concerns and if they are satisfied with how the school has responded to concerns.

Pupils

- o Pupils are given regular opportunities e.g. through 'welfare Mondays', services, discussing healthy relationships including appropriate and inappropriate touching, reminders by teachers etc. so that they are aware of the need to report safeguarding matters and know where to turn.
- o Other agencies such as NSPCC, Police come into the schools.
- o Good practice – a school has sent a questionnaire to the pupils to ask them if they know where and to whom to turn in a safeguarding case.
- o Posters set out who pupils can turn to but they are also made aware that they can go to other staff as well.

Attendance

- o A process to check absences and attendance tracking arrangements in each school.

Visual/Building Matters

- o Safeguarding posters have been seen at an accurate and appropriate level for the children with the language being simple and appropriate and including photos, and different posters for staff with more details in five primary schools and the special school. As for the special school, it is difficult to get posters that are suitable for every pupil.

- o It was found that although safeguarding information is displayed in the schools, it is not on all occasions at the eye level of the youngest pupils.
- o Information posters about the designated safeguarding persons, contact details of the Education Safeguarding Team and Referrals Team as well as the Chair of Governors in each school.
- o All schools include photos of the school's designated safeguarding persons except for one school. The school had been including photos in the past but had been instructed to remove the photos from the poster. A recent template received from the Education Department with a place to put photos but decided not to.
- o Examples of safeguarding walls in primary schools with input from pupils e.g. pupils created posters stating who can help them, information about rights, NSPCC information.
- o Examples of boxes were seen such as 'worry monster' where pupils could write on a piece of paper their name and what is worrying them, talking boxes in class for pupils to give a note if they want to raise a concern/talk, a post box outside the Hafan "I would like my teacher to know".
- o All schools except one primary school with sign-in and sign-out arrangements. Be it an electronic system or a paper system.
- o Visitor badges are provided by most schools. One primary school does not provide them and one secondary school has arranged for visitors linked with the Council to use their official identification badges.
- o Arrangement to control access through doors with the use of a 'fob' in most schools. One secondary school has strengthened its arrangements of access through reception by using a keypad to a 'fob' following an audit by an officer from the Education Safeguarding Team.
- o Access for learners in secondary schools is not through reception, access through different doors which open at the start of the day and close before

being re-opened at the end of the day. An additional access gate to the site will be opened and closed in the same manner.

- o The schools' environment in terms of site boundary security is standard with the schools needing to strengthen any weaknesses in the fencing around the site are aware of this and addressing the matter.
- o Arrangements in place by the schools to check the condition of the site and address health and safety matters.

Contact with the Education Department

- o All schools were aware that they can contact the Education Safeguarding Team for guidance on matters below the threshold, except for one primary school.
- o Schools collaborate with Education Welfare Officers who provide support for families.
- o One secondary school reported that support had improved following the establishment of the Education Safeguarding Team. It was also noted that there are more officers and that it is easier to get hold of them to receive advice and guidance.
- o It was commented at one secondary school that the Safeguarding Team's visits were extremely beneficial.

Contact with the Children and Supporting Families Department

- o Happy to ask for the help of the Referrals Team, feel better getting another opinion on the way forward. Working together, pick up the phone and they answer immediately. Usually the response is quite quick.
- o Receive timely response from the Referrals Team. It was noted that it felt like a long time to wait when a safeguarding matter arises, the school prioritises the matter, but understands that the system is a decision within 24 hours. When the matter is a higher level concern, there was no instance of a

situation where a response had not been received before the schools' closing time.

- o It was noted in some schools that there is room to improve communication about 'below the threshold' matters so that the school can support the pupil appropriately.
- o Some examples of disagreement over the way forward between schools and the Children and Supporting Families Department. The schools consider that the support for the pupil/family needs to be continued for a longer period.
- o Some schools feel they are starting to investigate safeguarding matters by having to go back to the family 3 to 4 times to ask further questions following guidance from Social Services.

6. Pupils' Voice

- 6.1** At the first meeting of the investigation, the need to consider how pupils' voice can be included in the work of the investigation was recognised.
- 6.2** During the subsequent discussions on how best to hear pupils' voices, the sensitivity of the situation and the need for professional officers to undertake this work were emphasised as they have the necessary training and qualifications and experience of carrying out participation work with children and young people on sensitive topics.
- 6.3** A provider was identified to complete the work and members of the investigation reached a conclusion on the best option to hear pupils' voices but unfortunately it was not possible to proceed to work with them as they felt it was necessary to go further than what had been agreed.
- 6.4** The schedule for conducting the pupils' voice work slipped as a result. The scrutiny investigation would undoubtedly have the greatest possible impact on improving safeguarding arrangements through undertaking rigorous and comprehensive work, making recommendations that have been formulated with due regard to the voice of pupils.
- 6.5** The process of appointing a provider was resumed and the investigation was fortunate to appoint a provider to complete the work within an extremely challenging timeframe.
- 6.6** The work on behalf of the investigation was completed by Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies, CTD Social Care and Research Consultancy Limited.
- 6.7** Focus groups were held in May 2026 with 57 children and young people from primary and secondary schools, including members of the Gwynedd Youth Forum.

Primary

4 Focus Groups – Years 3 to 6

26 pupils

Secondary

4 Focus Groups – Years 7 to 9

31 pupils

6.8 The purpose of the work was to examine pupils' understanding of safeguarding arrangements in schools, in particular:

- o How children and young people would raise concerns;
- o Who they would turn to for help or assistance;
- o How they know who to contact within the school;
- o Do they feel safe, and have someone listen to them and support them within the school environment.

6.9 Due to the timetable and commitments of the exam period, it was not possible to include the voices of pupils in years 10 – 13. It is recognised that it would have been extremely valuable to include them in this work but taking into account various factors, it was concluded that the report and recommendations of the scrutiny investigation should be published so that timely action can be taken.

6.10 The main overall findings of the work were:

Experience of safeguarding through relationships and school culture

Reliable adults and emotional safety are central themes

See that there is a strong link between welfare, fairness and belonging and feeling safe

Pupils appreciate staff who are approachable and who respond to emotions

6.11 8 recommendations stemmed from this work:

Recommendation 1 - Continue to strengthen relationship-based safeguarding practices

Strengthen relationship-based safeguarding and have trusted adults on hand.

Recommendation 2 - Improve clarity around safeguarding routes and access to support.

Improve communication regarding confidentiality, referral routes and follow-up support.

Recommendation 3 - Continue to strengthen welfare spaces and pastoral support

Maintain and develop the welfare spaces and the early emotional support available.

Recommendation 4 - Continue to develop age-appropriate safeguarding education

Provide education on safeguarding that is relevant to current matters, which is practical and involves discussion.

Recommendation 5 - Strengthen pupils' voice and involvement in safeguarding

Incorporate the pupils' voice into processes to review the safeguarding and improvement of schools.

Recommendation 6 - Review behaviour systems

Strengthen equity, consistency and communication within behavioural systems.

Recommendation 7 - Strengthen support around peer safeguarding

Provide clearer guidance on peer support, boundaries and asking for support.

Recommendation 8 - Regularly review safeguarding arrangements

Continue to carry out regular safeguarding reviews that include pupils' voice across all age groups.

6.12 All but one of the recommendations are incorporated into the recommendations of the scrutiny investigation, namely recommendation 6.

6.13 It was decided that while there is a relationship between behaviour and safeguarding, the recommendation for schools to review behavioural systems goes beyond the brief of the scrutiny investigation. It is believed that it is a matter for the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to consider when scrutinising the item 'Attendance, behaviour and attainment of pupils in Gwynedd schools'.

6.14 A copy of the presentation on the pupils' voice work can be found at **Appendix 7**.

7. The evidence considered

7.1 The Scrutiny Investigation Group considered evidence:

- By receiving a **presentation by the Legal Services Manager on the legal context and a presentation by the Safeguarding and Well-being Quality Lead on safeguarding arrangements in schools.**
- By receiving **information about good practice** by experts in the field.
- By **addressing data, child protection policies and contextual information** along with **the Estyn inspection reports and a summary of responses to the 2023/24 annual safeguarding questionnaire** of the schools in the sample.
- By **receiving a written response** from the schools to questions sent in advance.
- **Visiting the 11 schools in the sample and holding conversations** with the following:

Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSPs), Designated Safeguarding Deputies, Teachers, Support Staff along with Chairs and Designated Safeguarding Governors.
- **Holding 11 meetings** of the investigation and discussion with officials from the Education, Children and Supporting Families and Corporate Services Departments.
- Commissioning a provider to complete **work to hear pupils' voices** and consider the findings and recommendations arising from the work.

8. Recommendations and Rationale

8.1 This part of the report contains the recommendations of the scrutiny investigation. All recommendations were given intensive consideration to ensure that they captured all the evidence gathered during the investigation.

8.2 Members of the investigation wish to highlight a principle which is of paramount importance and core to ensuring that there is an open and comprehensive safeguarding culture –

Acting on any safeguarding concern is a moral and legal responsibility on all individuals regardless of their role. Great consideration must be given to safeguarding at all times in any work and any development.

8.3 The recommendations are set under specific themes. They are not listed in order of priority. It is believed that the recommendations as a whole will lead to further strengthening safeguarding arrangements in schools.

8.4 Staff and Governor Training

Recommendation 1 - That training at the appropriate level should be held annually for all staff and governors and that the number of staff in schools completing the higher level training should be increased.

This recommendation applies to teaching staff, catering and cleaning staff, supply staff and Governors.

An example of good practice was seen in the all-through school where 2 people at each site are qualified to deal with matters following the completion of level 2 training. In addition, good practice was noted in relation to the intention of increasing the number in the secondary school Safeguarding Team and also giving consideration to year heads doing safeguarding training to the same level as the safeguarding team.

The resilience of safeguarding arrangements in schools would be strengthened as a result of more staff completing training at a higher level.

As part of the consideration of this recommendation, the need to strengthen safeguarding arrangements is highlighted to ensure that supply/casual teachers have received safeguarding training and are aware of safeguarding arrangements in each school. Good practice has been noted in some schools that the school (Headteacher) goes through the safeguarding procedure before the teacher goes on the classroom floor. Consideration should be given to whether the Education Department should be taking responsibility for ensuring that all/any supply teacher has received the appropriate training and has received a check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

During a visit to one school, a request to have level 2 training updated for Governors more frequently was noted as this would assist in keeping the requirements at the forefront of their minds.

A Designated Safeguarding Governor who had completed the level 2 training stated that the opportunity to work through different scenarios as part of the training would be beneficial and would enhance the training.

It is welcomed that there are three specific areas of training on grooming), the matters of Part 5 of Safeguarding Procedures Wales (safeguarding allegations/concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust), and whistleblowing arrangements for teachers and the Social Services workforce.

Members of the investigation are aware that the Human Resources Advisory Service is currently looking at designating specific safeguarding training levels for jobs following the guidance of Social Care Wales. This will ensure that staff are trained to the appropriate level on safeguarding. School staff are required to be involved in the work to ensure that an appropriate level of training is available to all members of staff.

Recommendation 2 - That the Education Department adapt its training slides to include one specific slide at the start of the training which includes specific contact phone numbers and email addresses so that staff can print them and keep them safe.

It is believed that highlighting important information on a single slide so that it is easily available to staff will enable them to act without delay. Names and telephone

numbers for contacting the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team, the Referrals Team along with out of hours contact information should be included.

Recommendation 3 - The safeguarding training should be even clearer, in that staff should refer any concern to the Designated Safeguarding Person or Deputy Safeguarding Person immediately and not investigate or make the decision for themselves whether the matter reaches the threshold. Staff should be reminded of this continually.

During the investigation there were discussions about the need for the safeguarding training to include the necessary information in a clear and easy to understand manner.

At one school, it was noted that staff would discuss among themselves if they were unsure whether or not to report a concern. It needs to be ensured that the safeguarding training is absolutely clear that any matter should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) or the Deputy Safeguarding Person if there is any concern.

The training should also explain the action to be taken when the DSP is not available, when there is an immediate risk, when the DSP has not acted, or when the concern relates to the DSP, the Head or another member of staff.

Clearly highlighting in the safeguarding training that all members of staff should record and refer any concern to the Designated Safeguarding Person or Deputy Safeguarding Person immediately and not investigate or make the decision for themselves of whether a matter reaches the threshold, would result in decisive action. Staff should be reminded of this continually.

Recommendation 4 - The Education Department should ensure that all Governing bodies are aware of the specific action to be taken when there is a safeguarding complaint against the Headteacher and the support available to them, ensuring appropriate and adequate support for the Governors in such cases.

One matter that arose when discussing with Governors was the pressure and responsibility of the role of Governors. A feeling of being 'out of their depth' with the

expectations and responsibilities, bearing in mind that they are lay people, was noted. The situation is even more difficult when receiving a complaint/dealing with a safeguarding matter. Comments were noted that Governors did not really know where to turn if the allegation is about the Headteacher.

The evidence gathered from the visits shows that Governors are firm in the safeguarding arrangements but are mostly dependent on the Headteacher. Consideration should be given to the support available to Governors by the Council when a situation arises about a safeguarding complaint against the Headteacher. It is also essential that the Chairs of School Governing Bodies are aware that appropriate support is available to them in order to equip them to respond to such a situation.

8.4 Pupils' Understanding

Recommendation 5 - That there is a need to continue to develop age and ability appropriate safeguarding education that reflects current issues affecting children and young people.

Age and ability appropriate safeguarding education is essential to maximise pupils' understanding of safeguarding matters.

Schools should provide safeguarding education in conjunction with external agencies that reflect current issues affecting young people, including, online harm, relationships, vaping, peer pressure, emotional well-being, consent and healthy relationships.

In the pupils' voice focus groups, pupils particularly emphasised the importance of practical and discussion-based safeguarding education. Interactive methods, videos and discussion sessions seemed particularly effective.

Continuing to develop age and ability appropriate safeguarding education using interactive approaches would lead to improved pupils' understanding of safeguarding matters.

Recommendation 6 - All schools should formalise the arrangements of sending a regular questionnaire to pupils to ask them whether they know where and to whom to turn in a safeguarding case.

Formalising the arrangements for sending a questionnaire to pupils would be a means of checking pupils' understanding of where and to whom to turn in a safeguarding case.

It was noted at the all-through school visit that a questionnaire was sent to the pupils to ask them if they knew where and to whom to turn in a safeguarding case.

This arrangement should be formalised so that it is a regular method of ascertaining pupils' understanding of safeguarding arrangements.

Recommendation 7 – Schools should communicate clearly, and in an age and ability appropriate manner, with pupils about confidentiality, safeguarding processes, referral routes, follow-up support and access to specialist well-being services.

The pupils' voice work shows that while pupils generally understand where to get support, primary and secondary pupils described uncertainty about what happens after concerns were raised. Some pupils were also unsure about how to access certain services, including school nursing and counselling services.

Pupils were keen to have clearer information about confidentiality, referral routes for support and the follow-up support available.

The clarity should include clear explanations of safeguarding procedures, visual flowcharts, school services, posters and regular reminders to help pupils feel informed and have peace of mind when accessing support.

8.5 Support for pupils

Recommendation 8 – Schools should continue to invest in safe well-being spaces that pupils can use flexibly and without stigma, alongside visible pastoral support that promotes emotional well-being and early intervention.

Well-being spaces such as "Hafan" and "Noddfa" were seen as very positively by pupils and appeared to be important sources of preventative emotional support.

In the primary age focus groups, pupils regularly referred to trusted adults, teachers, the Hafan, posters, concerns boxes, sharing boxes and "worry monsters" as ways to raise concerns. Children appreciated these methods because they offered privacy,

choice and flexibility, especially for pupils who might feel embarrassed or anxious about speaking out. Many pupils explained that writing down concerns can feel easier because "not everyone has to know."

In the secondary age focus groups, pupils saw these spaces as preventative support rather than just crisis interventions. Young people repeatedly emphasised that each pupil may need emotional support at different times and concern was expressed that access to support should not be restricted or stigmatised.

Continuing to invest in the well-being spaces and pastoral support in schools will increase pupils' trust and their willingness to raise any concerns.

Recommendation 9 – Schools should continue to strengthen relationship-based safeguarding approaches, ensuring that all pupils have access to trusted adults who are visible, approachable and responsive to their needs

Across primary and secondary schools, pupils consistently valued approachable, caring and fair adults, sources of visual support and an environment where they felt they were being listened to, respected and included.

The findings of the pupils' voice work highlighted that children and young people experience safeguarding primarily through everyday relationships and interactions with adults.

Staff training should continue to reinforce the importance of relational support across all roles in the school, not just within designated safeguarding teams.

Continuing to strengthen relationship-based safeguarding approaches and ensuring that all pupils have access to trusted adults will strengthen pupils' sense of being able to talk openly with staff about anything that is troubling them. An open and inclusive culture is extremely important to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively.

Recommendation 10 - Schools should, where appropriate, continue to strengthen methods of peer support and provide clearer guidance around confidentiality, boundaries and when support from eligible adults is needed.

In the focus groups, pupils showed strong empathy and a willingness to support their peers, but some uncertainty remained about how to respond appropriately when friends disclosed concerns or worries.

Where appropriate, methods of peer support should continue to be strengthened. This could include peer mentoring, well-being ambassadors or structured discussions about appropriate support-seeking behaviours.

Clearer guidance should be provided around confidentiality, boundaries and when support from eligible adults is needed so that pupils are clear of the need to receive support from eligible adults in safeguarding cases.

8.6 Pupils' Voice

Recommendation 11 - Schools should strengthen mechanisms of listening to pupils' voice when developing and monitoring safeguarding arrangements through methods such as school councils, well-being groups, pupil surveys and regular consultation exercises.

It was seen from the focus groups that children and young people valued opportunities to influence the development of safeguarding arrangements.

Safeguarding should be an item to be discussed at School Council meetings and other meetings ensuring that the item is age and ability appropriate.

The use of various other methods such as pupil surveys and regular consultation exercises would also ensure that pupils' voice is at the heart of the development and strengthening of safeguarding arrangements in schools. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that pupils understand how their views contribute to change and improvement within schools.

8.7 Review of Safeguarding Arrangements

Recommendation 12 - Schools and the Education Department should continue to undertake regular reviews of safeguarding arrangements in schools that include the voices of children and young people of all ages and abilities.

Regular reviews of safeguarding arrangements that actively involve the voices of children and young people should be carried out as part of quality assurance and continuous service improvement arrangements.

Future reviews should include pupils from all age groups, including Years 10 -13, as their views were not included in the pupils' voice work due to exam commitments. This will strengthen understanding of safeguarding needs across the entire educational age range.

Alongside this, there is a need to develop a way to measure the impact of changes to systems and to measure and evaluate the safeguarding arrangements in a school. Schools referred to the Safeguarding Arrangements Audit which are carried out by the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team. Appreciation of the audit was noted and it was considered to be extremely valuable in responding to the audit's findings in order to strengthen safeguarding arrangements in the schools. The need to review changes to safeguarding arrangements in schools is emphasised, learning lessons and adapting to further improve arrangements. Creating specific performance measures to enable progress to be made and the evaluation of arrangements would be a positive addition.

Recommendation 13 - Schools and the Education Department should monitor any risk patterns and learn lessons as part of the regular safeguarding monitoring. It should be ensured that the lessons learned are shared across schools and relevant services.

Each school's management teams, staff meetings and Governing body should be continually monitoring safeguarding and setting out a robust structure to be doing this (e.g. a specific item on a meeting agenda).

Members of the investigation heard about examples of good practice in the school visits. For example, safeguarding matters are discussed at weekly staff meetings. It was noted that there are robust arrangements in secondary schools with the Safeguarding Team discussing concerns (new and ongoing) and putting in place a plan in terms of action to be taken in response to the concern.

With regard to Governors, it was noted that matters relating to safeguarding were addressed at all full meetings of the governing body. Safeguarding is a specific item on the agenda for some and others not.

Safeguarding should be a specific item on the agendas of school management team meetings, staff meetings and governing body meetings regularly. Any risk patterns should be monitored and lessons learned.

Governors should receive information on trends, information on the number of Part 5 referrals, Safeguarding Procedures Wales (an individual's suitability to work with children) and information on the lessons learned.

Particular attention should be paid to identifying concerns that recur or appear minor on their own but which, together, can indicate a significant risk.

There is also a role for the Education Department to monitor patterns and learn lessons giving an overview and consider themes of matters arising in the schools. It should be ensured that the lessons learned are shared across schools and relevant services.

8.9 Information Sharing, Recording of Safeguarding Matters and Systems

Recommendation 14 - All schools in Gwynedd should be operating on the recording system (Bromcom) which is funded by the Education Department to record safeguarding matters about a child. It must be ensured that the information is fed into the system by default and that necessary information is shared easily and in a timely manner with relevant professional officers (including Social Services).

At the time of the visits to the sample schools, 9 schools had an electronic system to record concerns, 1 primary school had an electronic system and paper forms (scanning the forms into the system) and 1 primary school had a paper filing system.

8 schools used *MyConcern* including a high school that uses it and the system *Provision Map* as well. One high school uses Microsoft Forms and the other high school uses ClassChart and the 'Meetings Log' in the *Provision Map* system (the two systems talk to each other).

A single system that facilitates the easy sharing of information with relevant professionals would improve the efficiency of safeguarding arrangements. All schools in Gwynedd should be operating on the recording system (Bromcom) which is funded by the Education Department to record safeguarding matters about a child.

It is noted that it must be ensured that the information is fed into the system by default and that necessary information is shared easily and in a timely manner with relevant professional officers (including Social Services).

The importance of ensuring that the chronology of events is recorded, as well as the rationale for decisions, is emphasised.

Recommendation 15 - That one core electronic information form be developed, which extracts information from all systems in order to share necessary information between schools in a timely manner.

Observations were noted in the secondary schools and the all-through school relating to pupils transferring from another school or council area. It was noted that the information was slow in reaching schools. Reference was also made to the efficiency of transferring information from primary to secondary school. It was noted that due to different systems it was not possible to transfer the information automatically.

In addition, concerns were raised about securing information about children who remained pupils in a school in Gwynedd but had had to flee temporarily for their safety to another council. Getting up-to-date information about them was a challenge.

Given examples where a pupil moves from one county to another, including outside Wales as well. With the responsibility to secure information about a transferring individual/child falling on the school to ask other schools/councils for the information.

The Council should consult with neighbouring councils and come to an agreement on when and why information is shared. The discussions should include the North Wales counties as well as Ceredigion and Powys.

The work of the investigation highlights the importance of working together across borders to ensure robust safeguarding arrangements.

This recommendation is based on good practice from Ceredigion, where 1 electronic information form has been developed.

Recommendation 16 - Call on the Welsh Government to fund a single system for all schools in Wales to ensure that information about safeguarding matters is passed on easily with children and young people as they move from school to school.

Members of the investigation recognise that each individual school has a right to purchase a system of their choice. However, it is believed that the Welsh Government should be called upon to fund a single system for all schools in Wales.

Investing in the BromCom system across Wales would facilitate the transfer of information when children and young people move from school to school.

It is noted that the Northern Ireland Government has funded this system for all schools in Northern Ireland.

The use of a single system nationally would strengthen safeguarding arrangements in schools and ensure that information about safeguarding matters is easily transferred with children and young people as they move from school to school.

Recommendation 17 - Call on the Welsh Government to develop a formal system to record and monitor patterns of suspicious behaviour, which do not meet the referral threshold, so that Social Services can consider an individual's suitability to work with children.

Members of the investigation discussed with officers from the Children and Supporting Families Department in relation to a scenario where a complaint was made about the same individual (adult) repeatedly even though the case did not meet the threshold. It was explained that if there was a complaint about an individual in a position of trust, a record would be kept, with challenge taking place on all referrals reaching the Referrals Team before a decision is reached. If there is no further action or the employer was dealing with the matter, then a record would be made about the adult on the Wales Community Care Information System (WCCIS). Consideration could be given to whether a pattern arises at that time.

Formalising arrangements to record and monitor patterns of suspicious behaviour, which do not meet the referral threshold for monitoring patterns at a national level, so that Social Services can consider an individual's suitability to work with children,

would strengthen safeguarding arrangements and reduce risk. This would lead to consideration of an individual's suitability to work with children in a meaningful and informed way.

8.10 Increasing Parents' Understanding and include them in Safeguarding Arrangements

Recommendation 18 - That the Education Department develop a consistent procedure regarding how schools can explain safeguarding processes to parents and how to include them in safeguarding arrangements.

Developing a consistent procedure regarding how schools can explain safeguarding processes to parents and how to include them in safeguarding arrangements would be extremely valuable in ensuring that parents have faith in safeguarding arrangements in schools and feel part of the process.

During the visits to the schools it was found that communication in relation to safeguarding matters varied from school to school. Information included in the school handbook, school website, safeguarding policy, newsletters, e-mails, social media messages and informing of any additional support e.g. supporting families.

Schools and the Education Department should ensure that Safeguarding Policies and Complaints along with the school Handbook are on the schools' websites.

There is room to improve and develop communication with parents across the county. The secondary schools referred to a safeguarding questionnaire being sent to parents. It was an opportunity to note if their child feels safe at school, any concerns and if they are satisfied with how the school has responded to concerns.

One primary school reported inviting parents to the school once a year to discuss the importance of safeguarding matters e.g. internet safety etc. using up-to-date information e.g. using the film 'Adolescence'. This could be something for schools to consider doing if practical, depending on the size of the school.

One secondary school noted that they had identified that engaging with parents was something that may need to be developed. It was noted that it was intended to look at improving the school's website by putting more safeguarding information there

and putting a 'Report a problem' button for safeguarding matters as was already available for bullying.

There is a need to explain to parents how the safeguarding processes work and what the rights of children and parents are within those processes, conveying the message in a way that is easy to understand.

8.11 Visibility of Safeguarding Information in schools

Recommendation 19 - That all schools adapt their lanyards for staff, to include (on the back) the information necessary for contacting the Referrals Team and the telephone number of the Designated Safeguarding Person so that it is easy for staff to obtain the relevant telephone numbers immediately.

Examples from schools included the information necessary for contacting the Referrals Team and the Designated Safeguarding Person's telephone number on the back of staff and/or visitors' ID cards.

Doing this is good practice as it makes it easy for staff to get the relevant phone numbers straight away. It is recommended that all schools in Gwynedd adapt their lanyards for staff in the same way.

Recommendation 20 - That all schools produce clear and age and ability appropriate posters, displaying photographs of the Designated Safeguarding Person and the Designated Safeguarding Governor, and place them in suitable places.

During the visits, safeguarding posters were seen at an accurate and appropriate level for the children with the language being simple and appropriate and including photos, and different posters for staff with more details in five primary schools and the special school. As for the special school, members of the investigation recognise it is difficult to get posters that are suitable for every pupil.

It was found that although safeguarding information is displayed in the schools, it is not on all occasions at the eye level of the youngest pupils.

All schools included photos of the school's designated safeguarding persons except for one secondary school. The school had been including photos in the past but had been instructed to remove the photos from the poster. A recent template received from the Education Department with a place to put photos but decided not to.

Support from the Education Department for schools in producing clear posters suitable for age and ability would be beneficial. Posters should include the photos of the Designated Safeguarding Person and the Designated Safeguarding Governor, and that they are located in suitable places. It is emphasised that posters need to be child friendly and accessible and suitable for pupils with Additional Learning Needs.

Recommendation 21 - That schools create a dedicated space to display safeguarding information with input from pupils including placing a box where pupils can raise a concern.

Members of the investigation saw examples of safeguarding walls in primary schools with input from pupils e.g. pupils created posters stating who can help them, information about rights, NSPCC information.

Examples were seen of boxes such as '*worry monster*' where pupils could write on a piece of paper their name and what is worrying them, talking boxes in class for pupils to give a note if they want to raise a concern/talk, a post box outside the Hafan "I would like my teacher to know".

The pupils' voice work has shown that pupils value the use of boxes to raise concerns. A dedicated space to display safeguarding information and placing a box where pupils can raise a concern in each school would ensure that pupils get specific input and have the opportunity to state a concern on paper if they are not comfortable enough to raise the issue verbally.

8.12 School Governing Bodies and Accountability of School Headteachers

Recommendation 22 - To recommend to the Welsh Government that there is a need to review the role of School Governing Bodies, and the line management (accountability) of School Headteachers.

In October 2025, Lynne Neagle MP, Cabinet Secretary for Education, announced that the Welsh Government was undertaking a review of school governing bodies in Wales. A reference group representative of the schools sector was established to steer the review. The aim was to present the practical options arising from this work to Ministers within a year.³

Following the Senedd Election held on 7 May 2026, a new Government is in power. Given the evidence considered as part of the scrutiny investigation and the pressure and responsibility on lay governors, it is believed that the need to review the role of the Schools Governing Body needs to be emphasised. It is also recommended that the line management (accountability) of School Headteachers including the relationship with the Education Department needs to be considered in order to ensure greater consistency of action across schools.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1** Members of the investigation greatly appreciate the time, honesty and commitment shown by all those who gave evidence during the investigation. The open discussions with staff, governors, officers and experts, along with direct input from children and young people, were key to creating this report. The investigation benefited from discussions which showed the implementation of safeguarding arrangements in schools.
- 9.2** The investigation concluded that there is already a lot of good practice in Gwynedd schools, with staff and governors showing a strong commitment to children's safety and welfare. At the same time, opportunities were identified to further strengthen arrangements by improving consistency, sharing information, developing training, supporting governors and identifying risk patterns early on. Members of the investigation hope that the recommendations will contribute to building on the culture seen in the schools where all concerns are taken seriously, continually learning and that all children know where to turn for help in order to ensure the highest possible standards of safeguarding.

³Welsh Government, *Written Statement: Review of school governing bodies* (October 2025) - <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-review-school-governing-bodies>

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- Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services)
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Investigation Brief

Appendix 2 – Safeguarding Roles/Responsibilities in Schools

Appendix 3 - Schools Context Template

Appendix 4 – Pre-visit questions

Appendix 5 – Questions asked at the visits

Appendix 6 – Checklist - Schools' Safeguarding Environment and Culture

Appendix 7 - Presentation on the Pupils' Voice Work

SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION'S BRIEF – SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS

A	<u>What matter is being considered?</u> 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. 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. 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. 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.
B	<u>Aim of the Investigation</u> The main question to address is: 'Are the safeguarding arrangements in the county's schools appropriate and implemented consistently?' It is intended to do this by asking the following key questions: <u>Research and establish facts:</u> • 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>

	• 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>) <u>Sample of schools</u> • How do the arrangements work in practice in the schools? 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) • 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>) <u>Visits:</u> Talk to Governors (including the designated safeguarding Governor), Head and Staff (including the designated Safeguarding Officer) in each setting.
C	<u>Background</u> Background documentation - 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	<u>Gathering Evidence</u> - External expert in the field - The Council's Internal Experts in the field - 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

	- In 11 schools - 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> - Weigh up the evidence gathered from those interviewed - Consider research information and background information		
DD	<u>Writing the Report</u> - 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> - 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> - 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 - 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	- 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: - 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	• 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	• 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>	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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>	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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 –
Link to the report -

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

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

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? ○ <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

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? ○ <i>Were any shortcomings found in your most recent assessment?</i> ○ <i>What has been done/needs to be done in response?</i>	
What arrangements do you have in place to ensure safety – ○ <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

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

WORKING WITH OTHERS

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

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

<i>Area to consider</i>	<i>Evidence/Your comments</i>
From the discussions/information presented to you: ➤ 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?	
From your discussions with school staff, are you assured that <i>safeguarding is everyone's responsibility?</i>	
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? Do staff refer to the Safeguarding Policies and Procedures?	
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?	
From the discussions are you assured that there are positive relationships between staff and between staff and learners in place in the school?	
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...	
<i>ANYTHING ELSE THAT IS RELEVANT</i>	

Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools

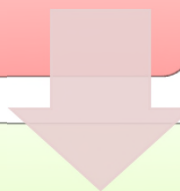
Pupil Voice Report

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



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graph TD; A[Safeguarding linked closely to emotional wellbeing] --> B[Wellbeing spaces such as Hafan and Noddfa highly valued]; B --> C[Pupils valued fairness, consistency and restorative communication]; C --> D[Questions raised around confidentiality and follow-up support]; D --> E[Behaviour systems impacted emotional safety];
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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

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