



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**City & County of Swansea Pupil Referral Unit
Civic Centre
Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SN**

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by

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

About City & County of Swansea Pupil Referral Unit

The City and County of Swansea Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is local authority maintained. It formed in 2014 following the amalgamation of the Afryn Education Centre, Brondeg House and the Pathways and Step Ahead Education Centre. It operates across three sites and caters for pupils aged 5 to 16 years who are experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties that may also affect their attendance. All pupils are from English speaking homes. A few pupils are 'looked after' by the local authority.

Afryn Education Centre caters for pupils aged 5 to 14 years, Brondeg House for pupils aged 14 to 16 and the Step Ahead Education Centre for pupils aged 11 to 16. There are around 127 pupils in total. The majority of pupils are of secondary school age and most pupils are dual registered. Around half are eligible for free school meals. One in eight pupils has a statement of special educational needs.

Most pupils have experienced significant periods of disruption to their formal learning prior to their arrival at the PRU. Many join at times of personal crisis, often towards the end of their compulsory education, and at different points during the academic year. Over the last three years, the re-integration figures for pupils returning to mainstream education have shown improvement, particularly at key stage 3.

There is an integrated line management structure overseen by one management committee. This is the PRU's first inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The PRU provides a nurturing and supportive learning environment, which meets the wide range of pupil needs well. Most pupils thrive during their time at the PRU and make successful transitions to suitable long-term placements. These include return to mainstream schools, colleges of further education and work based providers. Staff work well with mainstream schools and providers to ensure pupils maintain their placements long-term.

The PRU provides a wide range of learning experiences, which meet pupils' needs, abilities and interests well. These include many opportunities for pupils to manage their behaviours more successfully and acquire skills for life.

Over the last few years, leaders and managers have introduced many worthwhile changes across the PRU. These include improving behaviour with a strong focus on effective teaching and learning, providing a clear and strategic vision for the PRU and developing staff skills to manage the needs of pupils more successfully. These changes have significantly strengthened the school's ability to support its pupils effectively.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teachers make effective use of assessment outcomes to plan suitable next steps in their pupils' learning and to inform their individual education plans
- R2 Improve the provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills across the curriculum, particularly for those transferring from Welsh medium schools

What happens next

The PRU will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils make good progress during their time at the PRU. Most settle quickly into the nurturing environment and improve both academically and socially. With sensitive support and guidance from staff, nearly all pupils achieve the targets in their individual education plans successfully.

Over time, most pupils develop their social skills well. They work productively in pairs and small groups and most listen politely to the contributions of other pupils. Many develop their communication skills very effectively. For instance, in humanities lessons when discussing the effects of terrorism, pupils display a mature understanding of the potential offence caused by the publication of racist material. They are developing the confidence to share and challenge others appropriately about their opinions.

During science and humanities lessons, older pupils build effectively upon their prior learning and develop a secure understanding of concepts. For instance, they know about rock formations and the supercontinent Pangaea before its break up. They make accurate assessments of energy transfers to the national grid when considering the advantages and disadvantages of various types of energy including wind, solar, fossil fuels and geothermal.

Most pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills well and make suitable use of them to support their learning across the curriculum. For example, in English lessons, when reading the novel 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night', nearly all key stage 3 pupils use their literacy skills effectively to analyse the character of Christopher.

Most pupils use and apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills suitably to enhance their work across the curriculum. For example, they input the correct formula on a spreadsheet to calculate the amount earned by selling burgers.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well. Many explore different media, such as lino cutting, printing and pencil drawing very effectively. They benefit from visits to local galleries such as the Glynn Vivian, where they learn new techniques and later display their work to the public. Dynamic music sessions from a range of partners enable pupils to express themselves imaginatively through sound by using instruments such as keyboards, drums and guitars. They enjoy performing for other pupils. Younger pupils benefit from the experiences of a bush craft project to improve their understanding of life in the countryside.

A very few pupils transfer from Welsh medium schools. These pupils do not make suitable progress in their language acquisition and learning across the curriculum because they do not have enough access to Welsh medium learning opportunities. In general, many pupils from English medium schools do not practise their Welsh language skills throughout the day well enough to develop their skills systematically. They do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of familiar language patterns and, as a result, very few of these pupils use Welsh confidently when speaking.

On entry to the school, there is considerable variation in pupils' individual starting points, motivation and learning ability. For this reason, it is not appropriate to compare and report on the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time. However, in relation to their starting points, by the end of key stage 4 many pupils make strong progress in attaining a range of appropriate qualifications to support their future pathways. These include GCSEs in mathematics, science, art and English. In addition, pupils focus and develop their individual skills through the Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation and Skills Challenge and a range of vocational accreditations. Most older pupils undertake suitable placements to extend their experiences of the world of work. Nearly all pupils continue to build on their learning in colleges of further education or work-based learning providers at post-16.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

During their time in the PRU, most pupils develop strong and trusting working relationships with staff. They feel safe and know what to do and whom to turn to if they feel anxious or upset. These aspects contribute positively to the standards of wellbeing that pupils achieve enabling most to improve their attitude to learning and to make good progress against their personal targets. Pupils demonstrate a suitable awareness of the potential dangers of the internet and social media and they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on-line.

Almost all pupils make strong progress in their engagement in lessons and activities, and improving their motivation. They settle to tasks appropriately and persevere in sessions to complete their activities. Most pupils develop resilience and have positive attitudes to their work.

A majority of pupils attend the unit regularly and make strong progress overall when compared to their starting points. Over time, with effective support, many pupils learn how to manage their behaviour and emotional health more appropriately. They conduct themselves well, follow the rules in lessons and around the PRU, and respond courteously and positively to visitors.

Many pupils have meaningful opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities within the PRU. For instance, older pupils work well with staff to set up a break and lunchtime games console club. They set rules of conduct, vote on the appropriateness of the games played and manage ongoing behaviour in the club independently and sensibly. Pupils across the PRU also make positive changes to their environment, for example through eco club activities, and they have recently succeeded in obtaining green flag status. Many pupils engage enthusiastically in community events that develop their awareness of ethical and environmental sustainability issues further such as working on a beach litter pick with a charity tackling plastic pollution.

Many pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking. They make informed food and drink choices at lunchtimes and throughout the day. For a few pupils, broadening their choice of food and drink represents significant progress. During the morning check-in session, many older pupils engage enthusiastically in the preparation of breakfast, serving staff and other pupils using appropriate social skills.

A majority of pupils enjoy developing their physical skills through a range of motivating and exciting activities. For example, pupils in the primary phase take part in the daily mile and weekly swimming lessons with energy and enthusiasm. Key stage 3 and 4 pupils enjoy taking part in stimulating team building outdoor education activities such as coast steering, tree climbing and high rope work in a forest. They also join in regular off-site activities, such as football and sessions in a local sports centre through the '5 x 60' initiative. Nearly all pupils develop worthwhile skills and their confidence and motivation increase.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Nearly all teaching and support staff demonstrate consistent and sound knowledge of the pupils within their care and meet their needs appropriately. There is a relaxed and calm atmosphere across all three sites, despite the complex needs of many pupils. The staff ensure that the learning environment is attractive and welcoming and use it to support teaching and learning effectively.

During lessons, nearly all teachers demonstrate very positive working relationships with pupils. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very successfully and this ensures learning takes place effectively. They use their knowledge of their pupils skilfully to provide effective opportunities for pupils to challenge themselves in their learning, whilst supporting areas of difficulty sensitively.

Nearly all teachers use a wide range of activities and resources well to engage and motivate most pupils during lessons. Support staff complement pupils' learning well and model appropriate strategies to minimise any anxieties pupils may have towards their learning. This approach is particularly successful in developing pupils' ability to think positively about their learning and to persevere with tasks, which previously may have triggered outbursts of challenging or unacceptable behaviour.

Many teachers use a variety of questioning techniques skilfully, such as open-ended questions to draw out and develop pupil responses well. Staff make good use of verbal prompts and positive reinforcement to remind pupils of prior learning.

In the majority of lessons, oral feedback is natural and helpful, and gauges pupils' understanding as a basis for further learning well. Most teachers' written feedback gives pupils helpful pointers as to what to do to improve their work. Teachers also encourage pupils to rate their lessons and through meaningful discussion, agree how to enhance future learning experiences. Most teachers' planning includes suitable use of pupil targets. While nearly all staff monitor and assess their pupils' progress regularly, a few teachers do not analyse the information they collect well enough to plan suitable next steps in their pupils' learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is relevant to the needs and abilities of pupils. It consists of a combination of National Curriculum core subjects supplemented with appropriate further learning experiences, such as health and wellbeing sessions, expressive arts and outdoor education experiences. Older pupils follow the Welsh Baccalaureate, GCSE courses and a suitable range of vocational qualifications. Wherever possible, pupils who retain part-time mainstream placements continue with their mainstream curriculum to ensure continuity in their learning.

The PRU has generally suitable provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum. For example, in personal and social education activities, teachers introduce the concept of money and personal budgeting using real-life contexts to engage the pupils and develop their numeracy skills successfully. In addition, the independent living skills programme provides pupils with beneficial opportunities to practice skills in real life situations such as using washing machines and shopping for items to use at breakfast times. However, the PRU's provision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills across the curriculum, particularly for those transferring from Welsh medium schools, is limited.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The PRU is a caring and inclusive community where staff provide a safe and supportive learning environment in which pupils develop an important range of life skills. Staff focus successfully on establishing positive behaviours and working relationships and improving pupils' wellbeing. This is a consistently strong feature across the PRU and is central to the work of all staff.

The PRU's family engagement team maintains valuable links with families and the community to improve and encourage pupil engagement. For instance, staff in the primary setting make effective efforts to increase parental involvement through concerts and coffee mornings. Across the school, staff use a range of social media and other flexible means of communicating regularly with parents to good effect. Events such as a 'crafternoon' at Christmas enables parents to join with their children and this strengthens home and PRU relationships.

Arrangements to promote positive behaviour are clear and well understood. Staff track and analyse records of incidents relating to challenging behaviour robustly. They identify patterns and plan strategies to help pupils to learn to manage their behaviours more successfully. This monitoring makes an important contribution to driving improvements in behaviour across the PRU, which is at the heart of its success in delivering effective teaching and learning.

On entry to the PRU, staff undertake a range of useful assessments to determine the starting points of pupils. They use this entry assessment data purposefully to plan an appropriate range of interventions and catch-up programmes for literacy, numeracy, ICT and emotional and social wellbeing. These programmes enable pupils to make suitable progress against set targets.

Staff collect a useful range of data to track and monitor pupils' progress. Where pupils have the greatest difficulty with an aspect of their learning, the PRU takes prompt action to address this. Whole-PRU performance information is analysed suitably to provide headline information about pupils' progress, including overall outcomes for specific groups of pupils. Staff also collect informative data on attendance and behaviour. However, the use of this data is inconsistent and teachers do not always use this information effectively enough to inform target setting in pupils' individual education plans.

There is an effective programme of personal, social education. This valuable support meets pupils' emotional, behavioural, health and social needs well. All staff display considerable commitment and sensitivity in supporting pupils to help them access learning effectively. This level of support helps pupils to feel safe and develops a great sense of belonging to the PRU and the wider community.

The PRU encourages pupils effectively to develop healthy lifestyles and behaviours. Staff promote healthy eating and drinking well through attractive displays and advice in classrooms and social areas. Acts of collective worship are flexible and meet the needs of pupils suitably through, for example, opportunities to reflect on important topical issues such as radicalisation and current world affairs.

The school has developed worthwhile partnerships with a range of multi-agency professionals to meet the needs of pupils in a holistic way. Effective links with local authority officers and other agencies support provision for pupils very well. Community engagement projects with a range of partners also enhance provision for pupils. For example, links with the Prince's Trust enable more vulnerable groups of pupils to develop environmental awareness when they create, plant and care for raised bed areas in the PRU's grounds. Effective collaboration with mainstream schools to share good practice and curriculum developments extend provision effectively for pupils and improves their overall wellbeing.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides a clear vision for the PRU that promotes wellbeing and nurtures all pupils to achieve and develop valuable lifelong skills. She shares this vision successfully with all staff, pupils, parents and management committee members. The leadership team supports this vision well, providing a consistent and clear direction for improvement across the PRU.

The headteacher has high expectations of staff and ensures that they work as a cohesive team to offer and deliver an effective range of educational provision for pupils. For example, she uses her work from leading the regional head of PRUs network meetings to share effective practice for improving provision through consistency in curriculum design across areas of learning. The headteacher has also worked with regional colleagues to develop and implement an agreed model for the devolvement of the pupil deprivation grant across the region's PRUs. In its own setting, the PRU uses this grant effectively to maximise the learning opportunities for these pupils.

A good spread of leadership roles provides staff with opportunities to develop their skills and to be involved fully in the PRU's journey for improvement. Leaders are confident and demonstrate a passion for improving opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Across the three sites, leaders do not have timetabled teaching commitments, and this enables them to ensure a consistency in strategic direction and effective management of quality assurance arrangements. For example, the systems and processes to assure quality provision such as termly scrutiny of pupils work, suitable lesson observations and weekly staff meetings are secure across each site.

Regular staff meetings provide all staff with relevant information and identify clearly key actions for improvement. Staff discuss their roles routinely. This includes how they contribute to the progress of the PRU through improving provision and outcomes for pupils. For example, staff devised the PRU's 'half-way house initiative',

which aims to re-integrate pupils into their mainstream school. Staff routinely visit and liaise with pupils' mainstream schools. These visits include sharing pupils' work and assessments, and jointly writing pupils' individual education plans. This approach helps pupils to feel more secure and to re-integrate successfully to their mainstream school.

The management committee provides a good level of challenge and support to the leadership of the PRU. Members demonstrate a strong commitment to their role. The headteacher informs members of the committee suitably on developments and areas for improvement at the school. Members contribute appropriately to the self-evaluation process through regular visits to the PRU. This has strengthened their understanding of the evidence base for judgements and the self-evaluation processes as a whole.

Overall, the PRU's self-evaluation processes are robust with a detailed schedule of key events, which involve all staff. Leaders use first-hand evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work to inform judgements across the PRU effectively. Priorities in the three-year improvement plan link clearly to the self-evaluation process along with performance management targets for all staff. For example, the current improvement plan identifies the need to improve staff understanding of the mental health needs of pupils. As a starting point to addressing this issue, opportunities for staff to access mindfulness and emotional coaching training are developing well. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the self-evaluation process are also developing well. These include worthwhile opportunities for older pupils to take a more active lead for discussing how to improve the learning environment and identifying meaningful rewards for improvement as part of pupil behaviour systems.

Leaders are supportive of staff and encourage them to improve their own performance. Opportunities for professional learning across the PRU link closely to improvement priorities and personal development. There is a well-established programme of internal training for all staff. This has led to significant improvements in areas such as behaviour management and aspects of curriculum development. Leaders work well with mainstream secondary and primary colleagues to deliver behaviour management training. This work has helped to reduce referral numbers to the PRU, particular in the primary phase.

The PRU's deputy headteacher has a pivotal role as the chair of the education other than at school (EOTAS) panel for the local authority. The panel has developed a transparent process for schools referring pupils for placement at the PRU, with clear entry criteria. PRU staff also offer valuable intervention and support to maintain pupils within their mainstream setting. This approach ensures that pupils entering the PRU have had a series of purposeful interventions prior to referral to the EOTAS panel as a final stage in the process.

The PRU has robust financial arrangements, and expenditure links beneficially to agreed priorities. The management committee has appropriate processes to oversee and approve spending.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the PRU and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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