



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

A report on

**Tai Education Centre
Bishop Street
Penygraig
Rhondda
RCT
CF40 1PQ**

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by

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

About Tai Education Centre

Tai Education Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taff local authority. It provides education for pupils in foundation phase and key stage 2 experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There are currently 53 pupils on roll. The local authority placement panels manage all admissions to the PRU. Many pupils are dual registered with their mainstream primary school. Although the PRU aims to return pupils to mainstream education it provides long-term placements for a minority of pupils. All pupils have access to full time education.

Around 40% of all pupils are eligible for free school meals. About 17% have looked after status and around half of the pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). Pupils are predominantly from English speaking homes.

It is not appropriate to compare standards of achievement in the PRU with national averages or to analyse performance trends over time because of the wide range of special educational needs and changing pupil populations at the PRU.

The PRU was last inspected in September 2013. Since then, the PRU has undergone several changes. These include the PRU changing to solely provide provision for primary aged pupils, moving sites in September 2018 and the appointment of a deputy headteacher in April 2019. The current Head of Centre in charge took up post in September 2018.

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 highly effective learning experiences for pupils. Pupils with a wide range of needs and abilities make outstanding progress during their time at the PRU. Over time, nearly all pupils make exceptional progress in their learning and behaviour.

The PRU provides a caring and stimulating learning environment in which nearly all pupils flourish. The exceptional team work of the staff contributes well to the calm and relaxed learning environment where there is a strong emphasis on promoting wellbeing and achieving success for all pupils. Nearly all pupils are extremely polite and show high levels of respect for one another, staff and other adults. Learning experiences are highly motivating and build on pupils' interests particularly well. As a result, attendance levels are high, and pupils make sustained progress in their learning as well as their social, emotional and behavioural development.

There are particularly strong working relationships between staff and pupils. Staff use assessment information extremely effectively. They have an in-depth understanding of the needs and abilities of all pupils, and ensure pupils receive the support and intervention they need to become confident, independent learners. The PRU works very successfully with a range of external agencies to effectively support the needs of pupils. Parent partnership working is a significant strength of the PRU. These partnerships contribute extensively to the sustained progress pupils make during their time at the PRU.

The teacher in charge provides exceptional leadership. The leadership team are highly effective in their roles and work together successfully. This team ensures a sharp and consistent focus on improving outcomes for all pupils.

Leaders have a strong commitment to promoting the professional learning of all staff. The Tai Centre is a pioneer school for professional development. This emphasis contributes well to the work of the PRU and the highly-effective provision available in the local authority.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve provision for more able pupils

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the PRU to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the highly successful collaboration across all staff resulting in extremely effective curriculum planning across the PRU, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Nearly all pupils make exceptional progress in their learning and behaviour, during their time at the PRU. They respond particularly positively to staff's nurturing and sensitive approach, making outstanding progress in achieving the targets identified in their individual learning and behaviour plans.

Alongside these important achievements, nearly all pupils make strong progress in developing their self-esteem and belief in themselves as successful learners. These developments provide pupils with the confidence to engage successfully with their learning and to increase their participation in lessons. Many pupils challenge themselves appropriately to improve the quality of their work, and take pride in their achievements.

Most pupils develop their literacy skills extremely successfully. These pupils listen attentively and with consideration and respect to each other and to staff. In many cases, most pupils make well-informed responses, for example when working in pairs and giving each other instructions on how to tie a shoe lace successfully whilst one of the pair is blindfolded. Many pupils use a suitable range of subject-based vocabulary extremely competently. They respond positively to effective staff modelling and use this vocabulary confidently to present information and to ask and answer questions. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils describe how to partition numbers to their peers.

Most pupils make especially strong progress in developing their reading skills from their starting points on entry to the PRU. A few pupils make exceptional progress and read well above the level to be expected for their age and ability. Most pupils read a range of texts with increasing accuracy and fluency. For example, older pupils in the foundation phase read a short story independently and demonstrate a secure understanding of each sentence. For a very few more able pupils there is inconsistent challenge in activities which limits the progress they make.

Across the PRU, most pupils make highly effective progress in developing their writing skills. Over time, their presentation, structure and form improve significantly over time. For example, younger pupils in the foundation phase hold their pencils appropriately and are beginning to form letters correctly, writing from left to right. In Year 5 and Year 6, most pupils often draft their extended written pieces for different subjects in their rough books before completing a final neat write-up, such as to explain the properties and uses of different materials in science.

Over time, most pupils develop strong numeracy skills, which they apply successfully in a range of contexts and subjects. For example, in the foundation phase younger pupils divide sandwiches into quarters accurately. In science lessons, pupils in key stage 2 calculate how many 100ml cylinders are needed to fill a 2 litre bottle with water during an experiment. Overall, pupils' use of their numeracy skills in many topic-based lessons is developing their confidence well in real life situations and helping to promote valuable life skills.

Nearly all pupils develop their knowledge, skills and application of information and communications technology (ICT) effectively. They use these skills well for a range of purposes across the curriculum, such as when researching, drafting their work, or using graphics to improve the presentation of their work. For example, older pupils in key stage 2 use the internet with confidence to share and use relevant 'apps' to support their work on planning a car wash business model.

Across the PRU, most pupils develop their thinking and reflection skills extremely well. They respond positively to opportunities in their learning to make choices and reflect meaningfully on the consequences of these choices. The development of these skills contributes significantly to pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning and actions.

Nearly all pupils enjoy taking part in regular outdoor activities where they develop their physical skills and learn to work effectively as team members. For example, the PRU's football team participates successfully in local tournaments with mainstream schools.

Most pupils enjoy participating in exciting and stimulating activities to develop their creative skills. They are very proud to see their work and ideas displayed prominently around the school. For example, the eco committee designed and produced an interactive information board which many pupils use to make choices on activities to keep the school tidy.

Many pupils use incidental Welsh phrases and simple sentences with confidence, in context and throughout the school day. A minority of older key stage 2 pupils spontaneously answer questions in Welsh and show pride in this ability.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils make very strong progress in improving their levels of wellbeing and have exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. The PRU provides them with valuable support and encouragement. Nearly all pupils feel safe and benefit from opportunities where they feel relaxed and nurtured.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils during lessons and when moving around the PRU is usually outstanding. They wait patiently to take their turn to speak and share their ideas constructively when working together. Nearly all pupils are polite to each other, their teachers and other adults, showing courtesy and respect.

Almost all pupils understand and follow classroom routines readily. For example, at the start of the day, when pupils come in to the classroom, they settle quickly and start introductory activities with minimal direction. Most pupils show interest in their work and sustain their concentration extremely well, working particularly effectively either independently or as part of a small group. Most are eager to 'have a go' when they encounter new tasks. For example, nearly all pupils are especially enthusiastic about their current curriculum project to develop a business using a £50 investment. As part of this project, younger pupils in the foundation phase contribute usefully in making candle holders and trinket boxes to sell at the summer fete.

Many pupils participate with great enthusiasm in the responsibilities that they undertake, from classroom helper through to digital leaders, providing valuable support to other pupils using technology. The PRU council members are proud of their role in naming the PRU mascot 'Jesse the Giraffe'. They take useful notes of meetings and offer regular suggestions on how to use school council funds purposefully, for example to purchase basketball nets and scooters for the playground. The eco council makes a valuable contribution by growing flowers and keeping the school tidy. This group helps pupils to develop a secure understanding of sustainability through routine activities such as not using or recycling plastic bottles at lunchtime.

Almost all pupils understand the importance of being healthy and many make suitable choices from the salad bar at lunchtime. They participate with enthusiasm in physical activities during lunch and break time and regularly access running the mile a day challenge.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in the PRU. They feel that there is an inclusive family atmosphere where the staff are nurturing and give them exceptional support. Pupils know who to turn to if they are concerned, upset or worried. They are extremely confident that staff will address any issues they have effectively, yet discreetly.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

The PRU provides a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum that meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. Detailed schemes of work and a range of exciting and high-quality learning experiences ensure that there is a consistent approach with well-planned progression in pupils' learning throughout their time at the PRU.

Teachers are particularly effective in planning for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum. There is a purposeful approach to planning learning activities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Teachers' use of Welsh across the curriculum is very good. Many teachers are strong language models using common Welsh phrases and sentences beneficially throughout the day. For example, a bilingual assembly includes a particular Welsh story and songs.

All teachers use their secure knowledge of pupils' needs and abilities particularly well. They plan relevant and differentiated learning experiences that meet the wide range of pupils' needs extremely successfully. Teachers' planning is robust. All use a range of resources particularly well to engage, motivate and develop pupils' interests in their learning. Most teachers are highly skilled in capturing the imagination of their pupils and using this to promote positive attitudes to learning.

Staff across the PRU work together expertly to ensure consistency in planning and approach. They routinely reinforce pupils' belief in their ability to manage their own behaviours, learn independently and achieve success on a daily basis. This is a particular strength of the PRU's provision and makes a significant contribution to pupils' exceptional outcomes.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. These relationships enable teachers to plan challenging learning experiences, to which most pupils respond enthusiastically. Most teachers reinforce key concepts, including strategies

to promote pupils' independent learning, in innovative ways. For example, these teachers use well established approaches to help develop pupils' problem-solving skills. This support has a very positive effect on pupils' resilience and resourcefulness both in their learning and behaviour.

Nearly all teachers use a range of questioning styles very effectively to encourage pupils to reflect carefully on their learning and behaviour. They provide relevant verbal feedback, skilfully reinforcing key messages and concepts to remind pupils of their next steps in learning. Where appropriate, teachers provide meaningful written feedback to support pupils' further learning.

Nearly all teachers use assessment information strategically to plan purposeful pupil targets for behaviour and learning. These targets are incorporated skilfully into daily lessons. Teachers involve pupils fully in target-setting and monitoring activities, promoting a strong sense of pupil ownership of their learning and behaviour.

Nearly all teachers use ongoing pupil assessments consistently well during lessons. They are adept at developing pupils' understanding and use of self-assessment in their learning based on relevant success criteria. When pupils are confident in assessing the quality of their work, teachers then explore and encourage peer-assessment as part of social engagement with class peers in a non-threatening approach. As a consequence, many pupils learn to value the input from their peers and respond in a measured way to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The PRU provides exceptionally high-quality care, support and guidance for its pupils. Through a broad and informative range of highly-effective assessments when pupils enter the PRU, staff get to know their individual needs very quickly. This well-organised and careful approach to assessment by nearly all teachers continues regularly and is a particularly strong feature of provision. This enables staff to monitor individuals and specific groups very closely. As a result, relevant learning programmes are implemented quickly, reviewed often and adapted as necessary to enable pupils to make particularly strong progress.

The PRU has an extremely consistent and positive behaviour management system. Where incidents do occur, they are recorded, monitored and analysed carefully by staff to inform future strategies. As a result, nearly all pupils learn to manage their behaviour with exceptional success.

The PRU has extremely robust procedures to support transition and re-integration into mainstream schools. In the most successful collaborations, joint monitoring and recording arrangements lead to especially productive relationships that benefit pupils greatly.

Nearly all staff work with an extensive range of external services to provide extremely valuable support for meeting pupils' needs. These services include the local educational psychologist and attendance and wellbeing officer. The PRU has particularly strong partnership working with parents, such as through the valuable on-site parenting programme for fostering their involvement in their child's education. This programme, which is delivered termly, is highly effective in improving family

relationships as well as behaviour management in the home. All parents receive daily texts or phone calls, with a weekly report sent home, about their child's progress and relevant areas for improvement.

Staff provide pupils with valuable advice and guidance to make healthy lifestyle choices. This is a strong focus at the PRU. As well as attending interesting and informative assemblies, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to take part in exciting activities such as cooking healthy snacks for the summer fete and taking part in regular physical exercise including a samba workshop. Staff promote pupils' emotional resilience extremely effectively using a range of programmes to encourage effective relaxation and calming strategies.

Nearly all members of staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their life skills successfully. In regular coffee mornings, most pupils interact with their local community and raise money for charities. The PRU eisteddfod enables pupils to celebrate their cultural heritage. 'Tai's Got Talent' and the annual Christmas concert help pupils to develop their confidence and expressive skills very successfully. Parents support these events well and staff use these opportunities beneficially for pupils to showcase their work.

Respect for others and their background is an intrinsic part of the PRU's ethos and work. As well as considering other countries and cultures in the curriculum, pupils learn about world faiths, including seasonal visits for assemblies from the local church.

The extra-curricular and extended curriculum helps pupils well to develop important life skills. For example, older pupils participate in outdoor pursuits and learn team-building skills while developing their confidence and self-esteem. They participate in activities that take them out of their comfort zones, such as gorge walking and learn to manage themselves extremely confidently in different contexts.

Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The head of centre has worked successfully with staff to create and establish a clear vision for the PRU. This vision centres on the PRU's motto of 'learning together' to support pupils to become confident and valued independent learners, whose individual aim is to 'be the best you that you can be'. Across the PRU's full community, there is a strong sense of purpose and commitment to meeting these aims. This constancy and determination makes a significant contribution to the exceptional standards that pupils achieve and their high levels of wellbeing.

Senior leaders provide clear direction and set high expectations for all aspects of the PRU's work. They model and promote professional values and behaviours such as mutual respect, openness and a willingness to learn, which contributes positively to strong team working and collaboration between staff. For example, the regular cycle of staff and team meetings is very effective for sharing information, discussing priorities and influencing improvement planning at individual and strategic levels. In particular, the weekly staff meetings, which are often led by different staff, make a significant contribution to promoting best practice in teaching and learning. This approach is helping to drive improvement successfully across the PRU.

The PRU works extremely well with a range of partners in order to benefit pupil outcomes. This approach includes strong partnership working with parents and carers. There are also established links with the mainstream primary schools that the majority of pupils attend for one or more days a week. The PRU has held joint training, planning and teaching with staff from these schools to help meet pupils' needs better, in particular to reduce anxieties and to manage behavioural issues.

The recently-formed management committee has been strengthened to include wider representation and specialist expertise. The useful structure of sub-committees, as well as individual visits to the PRU, is helping management committee members to gain a clear insight into the PRU's strengths and areas for development. These members use this information skilfully in their challenge and support role with senior leaders, and to work together in setting the PRU's strategic priorities.

The strong emphasis on improvement planning has supported a culture of continuous development in all areas of the PRU's work. Self-evaluation arrangements draw on a wide range of suitable first-hand evidence. This evidence includes the views of pupils, parents and carers, and partner mainstream schools from regular surveys about the quality of provision, as well as a comprehensive analysis of pupil outcomes. The findings from the robust arrangements for lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' weekly planning also make a valuable contribution to the evidence base. This extensive range of evidence contributes successfully to identifying relevant priority areas for improvement. This approach informs the school improvement plan suitably, with progress monitored closely.

The PRU's arrangements for staff professional learning are a significant strength. All teaching and support staff participate in a considerable range of activities to improve their practice within and beyond the PRU. For example, internally, staff make valuable use of a video-based professional learning platform. Through this platform, staff share and discuss their ideas about aspects of effective practice observed in their triad groups. Many members of staff also share aspects of the PRU's effective practice with other schools, including mainstream, special and PRUs, both locally and nationally. These activities contribute usefully to the strong trusting atmosphere amongst staff, who show high levels of motivation to try new or different approaches to improve their own practice and outcomes for pupils. Overall, the PRU's comprehensive provision for professional learning, and the positive impact that it has on improving practice and pupil outcomes, is beneficial to its role as a Professional Learning Pioneer School.

The PRU has an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of its pupils. The head of centre and the management committee work closely with the local authority to ensure prudent planning for the PRU's budget, including allocating expenditure for identified priorities, with robust monitoring arrangements. Current priorities include continuing to make effective use of grant funding to support the wellbeing and progress of all vulnerable pupils.

The PRU's internal environment is colourful and welcoming with attractive displays of pupils' work and achievements. The outside areas provide generally suitable play and sporting opportunities, with a grass area and yard that is utilised well.

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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