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

Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: Special Measures

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Date of visit: November 2021

by

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

Outcome of visit

Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the Ty Gwyn PRU from the list of PRUs requiring special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Address the shortcomings in the management of safeguarding identified during the inspection

Leaders have ensured that the PRU has made significant progress in meeting this recommendation.

Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture across the PRU. They have established robust safeguarding procedures and all staff apply these in a systematic and consistent manner. For example, senior leaders monitor rigorously the use of an electronic system to report and record concerns during weekly meetings and note outcomes for action. All staff are trained in the use of this system and have immediate access to log concerns. Senior leaders carry out frequent 'dip tests' with staff to check their understanding of safeguarding is up-to-date. The PRU has successfully introduced revised and appropriate systems for the administration of pupils' medication.

The PRU has strengthened its use of pupil voice considerably with a strong focus on the rights respecting agenda, alongside its trauma-informed approach. All staff are fully trained in these approaches which strongly support the safeguarding culture for pupils and staff at the PRU. As a result, professional relationships between pupils and staff have improved considerably, and nearly all pupils are respectful to peers, staff, and visitors.

The PRU has introduced secure procedures to safeguard pupils' online activities. All devices require pupils' personal sign-in details and have the highest level of filters in place to prevent pupil access to inappropriate materials. The PRU is well supported by the local authority to maintain the high security filter levels.

The PRU's policy prohibiting mobile phone use on site is applied rigorously. Over time, nearly all pupils have co-operated fully with this requirement. As a result, most pupils are less distracted in lessons and have come to accept that this action helps to keep them safe.

The PRU has a smoke free policy which is generally operating successfully. All pupils are aware of the consequences if they do break this rule. Leaders ensure that suitable support is in place such as an agreement with the local pharmacy to provide nicotine patches to help pupils break their smoking habit. Generally, pupils co-operate with the policy and acknowledge this action is to help keep them safe and healthy.

All staff are trained in the use of an electronic recording system to routinely track and monitor those pupils who are involved in all off-site activities as part of their curriculum offer. The system always includes a rigorous risk assessment of the activity and participants to safeguard pupils. Requests are authorised by either the headteacher or acting deputy headteacher. This ensures that appropriate measures are in place for all off-site activities and the whereabouts of pupils are accounted for throughout the day.

Senior leaders have introduced worthwhile safeguarding training for all staff, with a regular schedule of update training. All staff complete appropriate levels of safeguarding training in line with their roles and responsibilities.

The high priority given to safeguarding through training and the delivery of the PRU's refined processes has strengthened the safeguarding culture at the PRU considerably. Staff confidence, and their knowledge and understanding of the PRU's safeguarding processes are strengths.

R2. Raise pupils' standards and skills across the curriculum

Senior leaders and staff have worked together effectively throughout the pandemic to enable the PRU to remain open to support pupils' wellbeing and provide bespoke learning programmes for individual pupils. Staff also used this period creatively to extend their own professional learning.

Since the core inspection, the PRU has made suitable progress towards raising pupils' standards and skills across the curriculum. Staff have refined and make more effective use of the PRU's baseline assessments, intervention programmes and tracking system to plan for and meet pupils' needs better. At key stage 3, staff have adapted the integrated curriculum successfully to better co-ordinate and plan for progression in pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. At key stage 4, pupils now have increased opportunities to access and gain a wider range of qualifications to support their next steps towards further education, work-based learning, or employment. These developments, coupled with improvements in pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching, are helping the majority of pupils to achieve higher standards.

The majority of pupils make suitable progress from their individual starting points and recall prior learning accurately in general. These pupils apply what they already know sensibly to their current learning to consolidate and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. The progress of a few pupils is hampered by their persistent absence.

Many pupils listen attentively to each other and their teaching staff and respond suitably to the issues that they raise. For example, key stage 3 pupils ask relevant questions about the role of animals in the armed forces during warfare, and Year 11 pupils ask about calculating the probability of multiple events in mathematics.

In relation to their starting points, many pupils read confidently to the class, with more able and confident pupils reading with expression and fluency such as when providing facts about the rainforest. Many pupils are usually quick to self-correct, and often ask questions to clarify their understanding if they do not know the meaning of

particular words or phrases. Across the PRU, a few pupils lack confidence when reading to others.

The majority of pupils write suitably for a range of different purposes such as when writing a mood board to identify the key points to include in a poem. Generally, these pupils use a suitable range of vocabulary to complete tasks and structure their work effectively. For example, when in science lessons they describe the similarities and differences between animal and plant cells, or in English lessons when writing persuasive letters such as to the director of education requesting additional support and resources for the PRU. A minority of pupils' writing skills are too variable, particularly in different topics and subjects across the curriculum.

The majority of pupils develop their numeracy skills well in mathematics lessons and make suitable progress over time. They apply their number skills with increasing accuracy to solve everyday problems in different contexts and subjects. For example, when older pupils use the equation for power, convert units and calculate electricity costs in science. A few of these older pupils are particularly skilful in recalling key mathematical and numerical facts quickly and accurately and applying these to different contexts. Overall, younger pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in a range of different subjects and everyday problem-solving contexts across the curriculum.

R3. Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning

Since the time of the core inspection, the PRU has improved the behaviour and attitudes to learning of pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour and their engagement in classes and around the PRU have improved significantly.

The PRU has a clear behaviour for learning policy that focuses well on promoting positive behaviour. Leaders have introduced effective trauma-informed approaches to support their understanding and management of pupils' behaviour. Staff use the trauma-informed approach and positive behaviour management strategies consistently. Many pupils understand and respond appropriately to these strategies and, as a result, incidences of disruptive behaviour in lessons and around the PRU have reduced. A significant impact of these new strategies is that most pupils now choose not to be unduly influenced or copy undesirable behaviours that other pupils may display. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced since the time of the core inspection, these remain high.

The headteacher and senior leaders analyse pupil behaviour data regularly, which provides them with a clear understanding across the PRU. They use this data effectively to identify patterns of behaviour and where improvements and additional support are needed. Strategies used by staff to reward identified good behaviour are effective and weekly enrichment sessions are valued and enjoyed by the pupils.

The PRU liaises regularly with parents and carers about pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. For example, the use of text communication often means parents know their child's achievements before they arrive home.

Across the PRU, many pupils show interest in their work, settle fairly quickly to tasks and complete activities assuredly. When needed, pupils self-regulate their attitudes

and behaviours appropriately to enable them to remain learning in the classroom. In lessons, and around the PRU, nearly all pupils are polite and courteous to each other, staff, and visitors.

The PRU has developed a suitably structured form tutor time which focuses on pupil wellbeing. This includes the provision of high protein snacks for breakfast to promote wellbeing and concentration. Most pupils feel safe and well supported at the PRU.

The work of the school council is developing well and has a positive impact on pupils' experiences at the PRU. Pupils are encouraged to share their views with staff and each other. For example, pupils write well-presented letters to the headteacher about how to improve the curriculum. They provide balanced arguments for and against the concerns raised, and value the headteacher's response. Many pupils develop their understanding of the importance of citizenship, equality, and ecology issues through their work in form time. Currently pupils are developing their understanding of children's rights. These combined experiences are helping pupils to learn to respect and accept the views of others.

R4. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

The PRU has introduced a comprehensive range of quality assurance processes and professional learning activities to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and assessment. Regular lesson observations and work scrutiny now take place between peers and with line managers and senior leaders. Teaching staff and leaders work together successfully with the PRU's improvement partner to discuss and ensure evaluations are fair and reliable. As a result, staff are developing a secure understanding about the characteristics of good or better teaching and learning. Leaders also have a clear and accurate understanding of the individual and collective strengths of staff and areas requiring improvement.

Leaders use the information from lesson observations to inform plans for individual and whole-PRU professional learning opportunities. For example, during the pandemic period, leaders supported staff to improve their planning, delivery, differentiation, and assessment for learning. Individual staff also had access to bespoke support including online and internal and external courses. As a result, a strong professional learning culture and open ethos and dialogue has developed across the PRU. This approach has a positive effect on improving staff confidence and the overall quality of teaching.

In lessons observed during this monitoring visit, most teachers establish valuable and productive professional relationships with their pupils. They show a sound understanding of their pupils' needs and individual characters and use this information well to encourage pupils in their learning. For example, these teachers routinely make effective use of stimuli to start and finish the sessions, such as the use of a topic-related video or music, which they know will appeal to pupils' interests. They also have clear classroom routines and secure classroom management skills, which help to maximise pupils' learning time and opportunities.

Most teachers are good language models. They explain tasks well and give clear instructions. Many teachers provide clear lesson objectives and plan an appropriate range of activities to engage pupils in interesting topics. They use a suitable range of

resources to motivate pupils and help pupils to remain on task. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge skilfully to present facts and concepts to pupils in a range of stimulating ways, and to challenge and stretch them. Often, they make effective use of modelling, either themselves or with support staff, to help pupils to complete tasks to higher standards. At key stage 4, many teachers are adept at providing pupils with helpful information about meeting the demands of subject assessments and examinations. They offer full explanations about how pupils can gain higher marks and avoid easy mistakes, which pupils respond to very well.

In a few cases, the pace of the lesson is too slow, and teachers' narrow range of questioning offers limited opportunity for pupils to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills.

Nearly all teaching staff provide regular and encouraging oral feedback to pupils during the lesson. They are positive in acknowledging what pupils have learnt and encourage them to extend their learning further by posing different questions for pupils to discuss and clarify together.

R5. Strengthen the quality of strategic leadership and procedures for improvement planning

Leaders have made significant progress in meeting this recommendation in the context of the challenges presented by both the pandemic and staffing issues.

The appointment of the current headteacher strengthens the strategic and operational management of the PRU significantly. Her leadership provides stability and a clear vision for the PRU which, together with the contributions of the other members of the senior leadership team, is effective in bringing about positive improvements. Leaders have brought staff together successfully with an agreed and shared purpose to work supportively as a team.

Highly effective systems and processes support improvement across the PRU. Team meetings at all levels ensure the PRU's priorities are reviewed often and allow effective communication with all staff.

Senior leaders are realistic about the progress the PRU has already made and the next steps needed to continue the improvement process. These steps are meticulously planned and place the pupil at the centre of the process.

The headteacher's commitment to developing pupils and staff is evident. For example, staff have valuable opportunities to develop through taking on management roles and responsibilities. This approach builds successfully on the strengths of the staff and improves school leadership.

A rigorous process of performance management operates which provides all staff with support and guidance for continued development. Performance management targets link well to aspects of the PRU's improvement plan. Staff underperformance is managed sensitively and firmly by the headteacher who works collaboratively with the local authority. These approaches have increased staff confidence and improved practice across the school.

The introduction of trauma-informed approaches and practice through professional development for all staff, including accreditation as trauma-informed practitioners, has contributed significantly to improvements in provision across the PRU. The therapeutic model of support and intervention for pupils is a strength. This is enhanced significantly by the assistant educational psychologists based full-time at the PRU. This approach deepens staff understanding of pupil behaviour and impacts in turn on increased levels of pupil engagement and progress.

A strong collaborative working arrangement with the regional consortium impacts positively on the rate of progress of the PRU. Opportunities for staff to work with subject leaders within the consortium contributes to the improvements in teaching and learning.

A positive professional working relationship with the local authority is also supporting improvements across the PRU. This collaborative working relationship continues to develop as the local authority establishes the PRU's role as part of the wider behaviour provision across the authority.

Following the core inspection, changes made in the membership of the PRU management committee have supported improvement. Committee membership has widened and new members bring additional valuable skills to the committee. As a result, the management committee provides effective support and challenge for senior leaders at the PRU.

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