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

A report on

Ty Gwyn Education Centre
Cwmdare Road
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by

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

About Ty Gwyn Education Centre

Ty Gwyn Education Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taff local authority. It provides education for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There are currently 48 pupils on roll, of whom eight are girls and 40 are boys. All pupils have special educational needs (SEN), with six pupils having statements of SEN. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is their first language. Around 59% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national average of almost 48% for PRUs. A few pupils have looked after child status.

Most pupils have experienced significant periods of disruption to their formal learning prior to entering 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. As a result, there is considerable variation in pupils' individual starting points, motivation, and learning ability. It is therefore 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.

Admissions for the PRU are through the local authority placement panels. Most pupils are dual registered with their mainstream school and a very few pupils in key stage 3 transition back to their mainstream school.

The current senior leadership team have been in post since September 2018. The PRU was last inspected in September 2013.

Summary

During their time at the PRU, many pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning appropriate to their levels of ability. Often this is because pupils' disruptive behaviours impact significantly on the progress many pupils make in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning and engagement in lessons vary considerably across the PRU. While pupils engage constructively with their teachers in a minority of lessons, in a majority of lessons many pupils do not engage well.

Overall, the majority of teaching does not enable pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding to a suitably high level. The PRU's provision for aspects of the curriculum, assessment practice, and developing pupils' skills is weak.

Leaders are beginning to develop appropriate processes and systems to enable the PRU to run smoothly. However, too many aspects of the PRU's provision are unsatisfactory and do not meet pupils' needs well enough.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Leadership and management	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

Recommendations

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

R2 Raise pupils' standards and skills across the curriculum

R3 Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning

R4 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

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

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this PRU. The PRU will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the PRU's progress on a termly basis.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

During their time at the school, at key stage 3 and key stage 4, many pupils do not make sufficient progress in learning appropriate to their levels of ability. This is largely because the disruptive behaviours of many pupils during lessons interrupt their own learning and that of others significantly, which has a negative impact on the progress many pupils make.

Over time, a minority of pupils make appropriate progress in their literacy skills in relation to their abilities. These pupils develop secure listening and speaking skills such as showing sensitivity to the context during discussions and exploring answers carefully and with increasing confidence. Across the PRU, pupils' extended dialogue is limited. Many pupils have poorly developed listening skills. These pupils have significant difficulty in listening to staff and respecting the viewpoints of their peers. They do not use their communication skills appropriately in a range of contexts throughout the school day.

A minority of pupils have reading ages in line with or above their chronological ages, and around half of pupils read simple text independently and with accuracy. For example, about half of key stage 3 pupils read instructions independently for an activity on cyber bullying. They synthesise this information and use the content to identify apps for social media sites successfully. Many pupils do not get suitable opportunities to develop their reading skills in subjects across the curriculum and this hinders their progress in developing these skills. Throughout the PRU, the analysis of the progress of pupils who have participated on recently introduced reading intervention programmes is at a very early stage of development. It is therefore not possible to comment on the progress these pupils make over time.

A minority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their writing skills. They improve their letter formation, spacing, and legibility and begin to write well for different purposes and in different subjects, largely with suitable structure and form. For example, in topic work, these pupils structure a letter appropriately to the headteacher to purchase Fair Trade rugby balls for the school. Their writing is coherent and puts forward their points of view effectively. However, a majority of pupils do not develop their writing skills well enough over time. These pupils write in simple sentences, display little knowledge of structure and form, and do not always use basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops accurately.

A majority of pupils develop appropriate basic numeracy skills. For example, in mathematics, they apply their understanding to work out the perimeter measurements for a variety of shapes and can explain how to do this using mathematical terms with limited prompting. At key stage 4, a few pupils complete practice mathematical questions with adult support in preparation for future examinations. Overall, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills confidently across the curriculum.

Across the PRU, pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are weak.

Around half of pupils are beginning to take part in physical activities, both on the PRU site and in the local community. For example, a few pupils enjoy the weekly jujitsu sessions as well as parkour where they engage positively in a range of climbing and free running activities. This participation is beginning to build pupils' confidence and enables them to develop valuable social and life skills.

A majority of older pupils are developing effective independent learning skills. They take part in a limited range of beneficial work-related experiences. For example, in catering lessons they prepare cooked breakfasts and in construction sessions they measure and split bricks. However, overall, pupils of all ages do not work well enough independently or maintain their focus when facing familiar or challenging work.

A minority of pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales and a very few develop their Welsh language skills well.

There is no notable difference between the performance of all groups of pupils, including that of boys and girls, pupils who receive free school meals or those who are in the care of their local authority.

Over the last three years, at the end of key stage 4, a minority of pupils moved on to further education, work-based learning, or employment. During this same period, the performance of pupils achieving nationally recognised qualifications decreased.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Pupils' attitudes to learning and engagement in lessons vary significantly across the PRU. In a minority of classes, many pupils engage constructively with their teachers, enjoy their learning and demonstrate resilience and perseverance in their lessons. In these lessons, the majority of pupils show interest, behave well, and make appropriate progress. They work well with their peers to support their learning.

However, in a majority of lessons, many pupils do not engage well. In these lessons, many pupils behave inappropriately, disrupt the learning of others and do not participate positively in their own education. There is a regular pattern of a minority of pupils leaving classes during lessons and disturbing the learning of others. In a very few lessons, the behaviour of a few pupils poses a risk of harm to themselves or others.

About half of pupils improve their attendance following their admission to the PRU. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions doubled between 2017 and 2018, many pupils say that they feel safe at the PRU and that there are very few incidents of bullying.

A minority of pupils are polite and able to relate appropriately towards others and demonstrate respect for one another. In a very few cases, pupils show consideration of the needs others. For example, the PRU recently introduced form families at the start and end of each day. In a form family group session, pupils demonstrate a caring attitude towards a fellow pupil who was absent from the PRU. Many pupils use inappropriate and abusive language regularly when talking to each other, staff, and visitors.

Many pupils talk appropriately about how to keep themselves healthy. However, most pupils do not put their knowledge into practice and do not make healthy choices. For example, nearly all pupils choose to eat pizza, bacon rolls, crisps or chocolates and sugary drinks at snack time. A minority of pupils regularly choose to smoke on the PRU grounds during the school day. Most staff do not challenge this in a consistent and robust way.

Around half of pupils choose to engage in a range of physical activities on offer at the PRU including a rugby project, parkour, jujitsu, and football. A very few pupils engage in physical activities outside of the school day.

Most pupils recognise how to stay safe when using the internet. However, a very few pupils do not actively keep themselves safe on line when unsupervised and watch inappropriate media whilst at the PRU.

A majority of pupils offer considered opinions about ethical issues such as Fair Trade. For example, they contribute eagerly to debates about working conditions for people who stitch rugby balls for the rugby World Cup and put forward clear views supported by reasoned arguments. A minority of pupils contribute to decisions about what they learn. However, there are no formal opportunities for pupils to contribute meaningfully to the life of the PRU. As a result, pupils' contribution as leaders and active citizens during their time at the PRU is very weak.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement. Generally, learning experiences across the PRU do not stimulate and challenge all pupils to engage in their learning and make the best possible progress. Overall, the majority of teaching does not enable pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding to an appropriately high level. Many aspects of the curriculum, assessment practice and the provision for skills are weak.

In a very few classes, teachers use their knowledge appropriately to provide an enthusiastic delivery and purposeful learning atmosphere. In these lessons, pupils engage well and make appropriate progress. These teachers support learning well and facilitate mature discussion, for instance about the subtle dialogue in the novel Of Mice and Men, as part of GCSE coursework. However, in many lessons, expectations are low and teachers do not plan interesting, motivating activities matched to pupils' individual needs, interests, and abilities. As a result, pupils spend too much time on undemanding work and often their behaviour escalates and disrupts the lesson.

In many lessons, teachers do not use the PRU's behaviour management strategies consistently and allow poor behaviour to escalate and impede substantially on pupils' learning.

A majority of staff use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding and recall of previous learning. They provide useful spontaneous verbal feedback, particularly at key stage 4 related to GCSE level work, to support and guide pupils' learning. However, too often this is overly generous in praise of very modest work. Over time,

a minority of staff have improved the quality and value of their written comments. However, they do not always use this aspect of assessment to improve pupils' work or inform future planning.

The PRU has a suitable rationale for the curriculum it offers and the changes it has made over the past year. Leaders have revised usefully the key stage 3 curriculum to support pupils' transition and meet their learning needs better. At key stage 4, the PRU offers a widening range of subjects, including vocational opportunities. However, planning for pupils' progression to key stage 4 and to the next stage in their lives is underdeveloped. Links with other providers offer only limited opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and life experiences. Only a very few pupils re-integrate into their mainstream school.

The provision for engaging, motivational activities in the enrichment programme is not planned strategically well enough to fit in with other curriculum areas or to enhance learning of specific skills.

The PRU's provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is poor. It does not enable pupils referred from Welsh-medium schools to continue their education through the medium of Welsh, or make appropriate provision for all pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. Staff do not use Welsh in their daily contact with pupils. The Welsh language and culture do not have suitable prominence in teachers' planning and delivery of the curriculum.

The PRU does not co-ordinate and quality assure provision for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum well enough. Its planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy and ICT skills is particularly weak, and does not meet pupils' needs. As a result, teachers do not offer pupils regular opportunities to use their literacy and ICT skills in meaningful contexts. Generally, there is insufficient staff expertise to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Systems to track and monitor the progress of pupils over time at the PRU are underdeveloped. The PRU has started to capture basic information in relation to pupil progress, attendance, and behaviour. However, the routine and systematic analysis of pupil data is in its infancy and it is not possible to report on its impact.

The PRU has recently established an internal assessment centre. This provides new pupils to the PRU with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the staff and daily routines. A range of useful assessment activities provides the PRU with valuable information in relation to pupils' literacy and numeracy levels on entry. However, the PRU does not use this assessment information well enough to plan to meet the needs of pupils.

A very few pupils have statements of special education needs and all pupils have individual education plans (IEPs). These plans are useful and outline appropriate strategies for staff to use in planning to meet the needs of pupils. However, teachers do not track or monitor the targets contained in IEPs and they are not aligned well enough to the identified needs of pupils.

The PRU has very recently strengthened arrangements to track and improve pupil attendance. This includes following up on daily absence and, if needed, transporting pupils to the centre. An education welfare officer recently allocated to support pupil attendance at the PRU is working with staff to improve attendance rates. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this provision.

The recently introduced form family approach provides opportunities for staff and pupils to develop positive working relationships. A minority of staff use form family time to have discussions with pupils about their daily targets. In addition, these sessions allow the delivery of both the personal and social education curriculum and acts of collective worship. However, most staff use these times inconsistently and pupil disengagement dilutes the value of this approach.

Senior leaders at the PRU have worked closely with the educational psychology and behaviour support services of the local authority to develop a whole school approach to managing behaviour. However, this approach is ineffective as not all members of staff implement it consistently.

Most staff do not have a consistent or confident approach to supporting positive pupil behaviour and, as a result, only a very few pupils understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. At times, many staff lack confidence in managing the volatile, unpredictable, and dangerous behaviours of a minority of pupils. These dangerous behaviours often escalate and make the PRU unsafe for both pupils and staff.

The PRU provides a suitable time out system. Pupils are able to use this when the environment they are in is causing them too much stress. As a result, a very few pupils are beginning to learn to regulate their behaviours. However, there are no dedicated spaces for pupils to remove themselves to safety.

The PRU has recently collected the views of pupils on a range of matters related to their experiences at the school, but has not yet had chance to act upon their feedback. There is no school council, and, as a result, the opportunities for pupils to influence the ongoing work of the PRU are extremely limited. There are no whole-school gatherings such as celebration assemblies within the PRU.

Pupils at the PRU benefit from the support and advice of teachers in relation to future career paths and options. However, there are very limited opportunities for pupils to attend work experience and they do not receive the impartial careers advice and guidance that they are entitled to.

The PRU has recently established an enrichment programme and links with a small number of external providers. The programme activities aim to provide pupils with opportunities to experience a range of physical activities. For a very few pupils this has led to them successfully completing a sports leaders award. However, there is confusion and uncertainty around which pupils attend off-site enrichment activities. This has a detrimental impact on the enrichment programme and the smooth and safe running of the PRU.

The PRU’s arrangements for safeguarding do not meet requirements and give serious cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

On taking up their positions in September 2018, members of the senior leadership team developed a joint sense of purpose based on supporting all pupils to achieve. However, since that time, instabilities in the leadership team have led to interim arrangements, which required responsibilities to be revised, and left too little time for leaders to concentrate on strategic issues. Despite the challenges presented during this turbulent period, the clear sense of purpose led to several worthwhile decisions, which have benefited pupils. These decisions include the development of an integrated curriculum model for key stage 3, the provision of form families and improved curriculum options for key stage 4 pupils.

Very recently, external support has added to the leadership capacity to revise policies and procedures, including improving and strengthening the teaching and learning policy and approaches. However, these changes are in their infancy and have not had time to embed and improve important areas of the PRU's work, including raising standards or improving behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching. Leaders are beginning to develop appropriate processes and systems to enable the PRU to run smoothly. However, too many aspects of the PRU's provision are unsatisfactory and do not meet pupils' needs.

The distribution of leadership responsibilities is ineffective for the strategic and day-to-day management of the PRU. The deputy and assistant headteachers have too many diverse operational responsibilities, which mean that they have too little time to focus on strategic issues. It is not clear within the leadership structure where the responsibility lies for ensuring consistent application of policies such as the management of pupils' behaviour.

The management committee and local authority officers responsible for quality and effectiveness have failed, over time, to address significant issues at the PRU. In particular, they have not met their responsibilities to provide pupils with an appropriate education in a safe environment. While the management committee and local authority officers have taken recent appropriate actions to support leadership, they do not provide the support and challenge that the PRU needs.

Processes for assuring the quality of provision and pupils' progress are at an early stage of development. These processes include an initial collection and analysis of performance data. However, currently, leaders do not know if pupils consistently make the progress they are capable of achieving, as they do not have secure data and information about pupils' standards and wellbeing over time.

Activities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are new, as is the management of staff performance. Until very recently, leaders have not challenged robustly the underperformance of teaching staff, which led to too few teachers improving their practice. However, the recent introduction of a clearly understood process and range of suitable activities to monitor staff performance is beginning to make a difference. For example, the recent feedback from observations of teaching and the scrutiny of pupils' work is helping teachers improve their practice.

A culture of staff collaboration is emerging and beginning to make a difference to pupils' learning experiences, including the curriculum offer for older pupils. Regular

staff meetings and training now focus suitably on standards. However, staff do not have enough opportunities to learn from the good practice of others within the PRU and from other providers. Leaders do not work well enough in partnership with the local authority or regional consortia to improve pupils' learning experiences.

During the last year, many staff have undertaken training, for example to support improvements in their management and understanding of pupils' behaviour, to develop curriculum knowledge and improve teaching practices. The impact of this training on improving standards of teaching and pupils' behaviour is not yet clear.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teaching, support staff and the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the pupil referral unit (PRU) and its effectiveness
- meet the teacher in charge/headteacher, management committee representatives, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the PRU's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their PRU
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the PRU pupil council and eco-committee, where appropriate
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship, where appropriate
- look closely at the PRU's self-evaluation processes
- consider the PRU's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the PRU has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of PRU documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the management committee, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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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