

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Special measures

Ty Dysgu

**Alexandra Avenue
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 9AF**

Date of visit: March 2026

by

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

Outcome of visit

Ty Dysgu is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

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

Progress since the last inspection

R1 Strengthen the management of safeguarding and address the shortcomings identified during the inspection

Safeguarding arrangements at the PRU are strong and securely embedded within the culture of the provision. Leaders have successfully developed and strengthened a safeguarding culture that places pupils at the centre of the work of all staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and well supported. There are clear and appropriate mechanisms for pupils to raise concerns, particularly within the secondary provision, with age-appropriate arrangements also in place for younger pupils.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. Regular and appropriate training has developed staff confidence and professional curiosity when responding to concerns. Leadership has strengthened safeguarding capacity through a well-structured team, including the designated safeguarding person, deputy and additional staff with enhanced training. This ensures that safeguarding practice is well supported and that staff respond promptly and appropriately when concerns arise.

Policies and procedures are comprehensive and align closely with current Welsh Government statutory guidance. Reporting structures are clear and well understood by staff. Record-keeping is detailed and secure. Leaders have established effective working relationships with external agencies. In practice, safeguarding is underpinned by a strong relational and trauma-informed approach, where positive working relationships between staff and pupils support pupils' well-being and safety well.

Overall, safeguarding arrangements are highly effective and well embedded. Operational practice is strong and leaders have a clear understanding of the next steps in further strengthening their strategic oversight of safeguarding. They recognise the importance of developing more systematic analysis of safeguarding information to help identify longer-term patterns, trends and emerging needs. In addition, leaders are beginning to refine approaches to gathering pupil and parent voice in relation to safeguarding. These

developments are well considered and place the PRU in a strong position to continue improving its evaluation of safeguarding practice and its impact.

R2 Strengthen the quality of strategic leadership to ensure that the PRU's self-evaluation systems identify priorities for improvement that are aligned to raising standards of learning and well-being

Since his appointment in March 2024, the head of centre, ably supported by the deputy head of centre, has established a strong culture of trust across the PRU. Staff report that they feel valued, listened to and respected, and this has contributed to a notable improvement in staff morale. Leaders have set aspirational expectations for pupils' behaviour and outcomes and have articulated a clear vision grounded in a strong moral purpose. This vision places pupils' dignity, identity and future pathways at the centre of the PRU's work. The emphasis on hope, resilience and preparation for life beyond Ty Dysgu demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of the complex challenges faced by pupils. It promotes an inclusive ethos underpinned by trauma-informed approaches, restorative practice and strong partnership working. These principles align well with pupils' needs and support the development of safe, nurturing and purposeful learning environments. Increasingly, staff across the PRU are aligning their daily practice with this vision, strengthening a consistent approach to supporting pupils' learning and well-being.

Leadership capacity has strengthened effectively. The head of centre has worked closely with the local authority to establish a clear and purposeful staffing structure, and leaders have reviewed job descriptions so that they align well with this structure. As a result, staff across the PRU have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Performance development review arrangements are robust and support staff to reflect on their practice, identify professional learning needs and contribute meaningfully to the PRU's priorities for improvement.

Senior and middle leaders are developing their leadership skills and understanding of accountability well. Clearer lines of responsibility and improved collaboration between leaders are creating a more cohesive leadership approach across the PRU. This collaboration is supporting improvements in important strategic areas, particularly in the development of the curriculum and the strengthening of assessment and tracking systems. As a result, leadership is becoming more systematic and increasingly focused on improving provision and outcomes for pupils.

Self-evaluation processes demonstrate that the PRU is becoming increasingly self-aware and committed to improvement. Leaders show a thorough understanding of the setting's strengths and the barriers faced by pupils. Increasingly leaders make use of relevant data and structured monitoring systems to evaluate impact, particularly in areas such as safeguarding, teaching and learning, and behaviour. Self-evaluation is generally honest

and purposeful and identifies appropriate priorities. Leaders are also developing greater precision in their analysis of information, for example through improved monitoring of attendance patterns and exclusion data.

Leaders gather a suitable range of first-hand evidence to evaluate the work of the PRU. This includes lesson observations, learning walks and regular pupil progress reviews. These activities provide leaders with a clear understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and the overall environment across the provision. Pupil progress reviews are particularly effective. They allow leaders and staff to discuss pupils' development in detail, identify barriers to learning and agree appropriate support strategies. Evidence gathered through monitoring highlights important strengths, including the positive relationships between pupils and staff, pupils' strong engagement in learning and the increasingly purposeful organisation of learning environments. Leaders also use this information to identify relevant areas for improvement, such as refining assessment for learning and strengthening personalised approaches to teaching and learning. Overall, leaders make effective use of both qualitative and quantitative information to evaluate progress and outcomes and use this understanding well to inform ongoing improvement.

Development planning is clear and coherent and is closely informed by self-evaluation and inspection findings. Improvement priorities are relevant and suitably ambitious. Strategic actions are aligned closely with these priorities, and responsibilities, monitoring arrangements, professional learning and resource planning are clearly identified. As a result, leaders at all levels understand their roles in driving improvement and there is a shared focus on strengthening provision and improving pupil outcomes. This approach is helping leaders secure important improvements at an appropriate pace. For example, pupils are increasingly engaged in their learning, attendance and behaviour have improved significantly and, overall, most pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

Professional learning and review arrangements support improvement well. These processes address key aspects of leadership, teaching, curriculum development, inclusion, assessment and quality assurance, and are generally aligned appropriately with professional standards and the specific context of the PRU. Professional learning focuses appropriately on important priorities such as attendance, trauma-informed practice, vocational pathways and the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, staff are developing their knowledge and skills effectively and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the provision. Overall, these arrangements provide a strong foundation for strengthening professional practice and leadership capacity.

Leaders work productively with the local authority to refine arrangements for pupil placement. Entry and exit criteria are being clarified so that pupils access the provision at

the most appropriate time and receive effective support to return to mainstream education when appropriate. This collaborative work is supporting successful reintegration for many pupils. In particular, leaders and staff place a strong emphasis on supporting primary-aged pupils to return successfully to their mainstream schools. PRU staff work closely with partner schools to design carefully structured reintegration programmes. During transition periods, staff provide direct support within mainstream classrooms and maintain regular communication with school staff. This approach helps pupils rebuild confidence, manage their behaviour and re-engage positively with learning. Partner schools value this collaboration highly and recognise the expertise and guidance provided by PRU staff. Consequently, relationships between the PRU and partner schools have strengthened and an increasing number of pupils are returning successfully to mainstream settings and sustaining their placements.

Partnerships with the local authority and the school improvement partner (SIP) also provide beneficial strategic support. The SIP has worked constructively with leaders to strengthen strategic leadership and improve the quality of teaching and assessment. Local authority officers have supported the development of a new secondary provision and the consolidation of services onto one site, which is improving opportunities for collaboration among staff and supporting the well-being of both pupils and staff.

Since the core inspection, the management committee has strengthened its membership and now includes individuals with a suitable range of relevant expertise. Members have a secure understanding of the PRU's work and are supportive of leaders and staff. They recognise the progress made since the inspection and identify appropriate priorities for further development. Increasingly, members are becoming more involved in the work of the PRU and are beginning to provide stronger support and more effective challenge regarding the pace and impact of improvement. Overall, governance arrangements are strengthening and are contributing positively to the PRU's ongoing development.

R3 Develop effective processes to track, monitor and evaluate pupil progress

Since the time of the core inspection, leaders and staff at the PRU have developed and implemented detailed, rich systems for tracking pupils' progress against all areas of their learning, behaviour, and health and well-being. These systems are now robust, securely embedded and provide valuable tools that staff are using effectively to inform and refine all aspects of practice.

Leaders have implemented a wide range of appropriate assessments processes through which staff gather valuable information. Standardised testing is used strategically, within the PRU's specific context, to establish baseline information. In tandem, staff at all levels contribute to rich and well-organised tracking systems covering, but not limited to,

progress against targets from individual development plans (IDP), progress against curriculum targets in all areas, attendance, behaviour, health and well-being, progress in vocational pathways, and relevant pastoral contexts. This information is centrally collated, cross-referenced and monitored over time by leaders to provide a detailed, holistic picture of progress made by pupils. Patterns and trends are identified at individual, class and cohort level, and these are used to inform refinements to practice. Staff at all levels make highly effective use of available information to support pupils, plan and adapt their learning, and identify next steps to drive strong progress in all areas.

Leaders have successfully fostered a collaborative culture in which all staff share information and use it to adapt their practice in response to pupils' progress and contexts. As a result of this culture and of structured opportunities for review and discussion, staff know their pupils extremely well, and build secure, trusting professional relationships rapidly. This open, information-rich professional culture is a strength of provision.

Leaders have ensured that there is purposeful professional learning in place around assessment. This supports staff at all levels to assess pupils' progress suitably and to be active in further developing tracking and monitoring systems. As a result, staff feel well supported, are developing their confidence in implementing assessment processes consistently, and many feel ownership of key elements of monitoring processes. In addition, the PRU's collaborative culture results in sharing of best practice and purposeful discussion, leading to ongoing refinement of assessment and teaching.

R4 Strengthen the curriculum offer for all pupils

Senior leaders articulate a clear vision for curriculum delivery and provide purposeful strategic direction that places health and well-being at the heart of the curriculum.

In the secondary phase, leaders and staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum with strengths in health and well-being and vocational learning, which support pupils' engagement and progress highly effectively. The vocational offer is broad and balanced, and kept under ongoing review to ensure relevance and sustainability. Options such as fishing, nail art, digital creativity and therapeutic interventions, in partnership with external providers, give pupils practical skills and help them explore potential careers. In addition, many pathways lead to vocational and personal development qualifications tailored to pupils' needs and interests.

Leaders and staff have clearly mapped out and structured mathematics provision from Years 1 to 11 to provide a coherent curriculum which is clearly focused on the progressive development of knowledge and skills. As a result, nearly all pupils make secure progress in mathematics from their varied starting points, with older pupils studying towards valuable GCSE qualifications. Designated mathematics areas are now fully established in

classrooms, providing structured opportunities for problem-solving, reasoning, and the application of mathematical concepts within continuous provision.

Provision for literacy is planned cohesively and progressively across all parts of the PRU. This supports consistency across classes, progression within and between phases, and ensures that pupils' progress in all elements of their literacy is supported by strategic planning and monitoring. In primary classes, the teaching of phonics is fully embedded, taught daily and guided by a whole-school phonics overview, teaching plan and assessment guide. As a result of strengthened provision, nearly all pupils make secure progress with their literacy skills during their time at the PRU.

Leaders and staff have worked collaboratively to design and implement a new primary curriculum with a clear focus on pupils and their locality. Half-termly thematic units, supported by clear medium and short-term planning, and shaped by pupil voice, provide an improved, broader and more engaging learning offer. This curriculum provides a secure framework within which adaptive, responsive teaching sets high expectations, fosters an eagerness to learn and enables pupils to make strong progress. Where teaching is most effective, staff plan a purposeful balance of continuous, enhanced and targeted provision, which allows pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their skills in meaningful ways.

Pupils benefit from a suitable range of therapeutic and enrichment experiences, including exciting outdoor learning activities, music activities, therapy-dog visits and lunchtime clubs. These opportunities support improvements in pupils' confidence, engagement, attendance, emotional regulation and relationships. The curriculum is further enriched through a range of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities, workshops and visits from specialists, including a harpist, chess and skateboard clubs, and swimming lessons. The PRU's highly effective use of its well-appointed forest school's area to provide pupils with rich, practical learning opportunities and to support skill development in authentic contexts, is a strength of provision.

Professional learning across the PRU is purposeful and sustained and is effective at strengthening pedagogy. Through purposeful collaborative work in developing and refining the PRU's offer, staff feel a sense of ownership and agency with regard to curriculum. Further, staff and leaders make effective use of strategically selected professional learning to support ongoing curriculum development and delivery. For example, many staff have worked with nearby partner schools to jointly develop practice and ensure that the PRU's provision mirrors effective practice in mainstream provision.

Parental engagement workshops for primary pupils have strengthened parents' understanding of their children's learning and progress. As a result, parents and carers are now more actively involved in supporting their children's learning.

The newly opened buildings housing the PRU's secondary provision provide a highly effective indoor and outdoor working environment for pupils and staff. This high-quality accommodation makes a valuable contribution to the PRU's work around pupils' well-being and self-esteem, while also underpinning the staff's work to establish a calm, purposeful learning environment.

Leaders and staff have enhanced the primary learning spaces by integrating differentiated areas and resources that pupils enjoy using confidently and independently. Outdoor areas continue to be enhanced, for example, through new yard markings, mud kitchens, sensory areas, planters, and a polytunnel. This is beginning to substantially improve the learning experiences for primary aged pupils.

R5 Improve pupil attendance

Leaders and staff have made strong and purposeful progress in improving pupil attendance and strengthening the systems that support pupils' engagement with learning. The notable improvement in attendance reflects leaders' clear strategic and aspirational focus on attendance and the consistent implementation of strengthened monitoring arrangements. As a result, pupils participate in education more regularly.

The introduction of the attendance toolkit and the collaboration with all staff in the development of the attendance policy clarify expectations and strengthen staff roles and responsibilities. Leaders track attendance information carefully and consistently, enabling leaders to identify trends and emerging concerns at an early stage. Leaders and staff use this information effectively to plan targeted support, interventions and rewards, which encourage pupils to improve their attendance and ensure that interventions align closely with pupils' needs.

Leaders have strengthened procedures for tracking authorised and unauthorised absences and maintain regular engagement with parents and carers. Staff follow up concerns promptly and maintain clear communication with families. As a result, authorised absence rates are declining while unauthorised absence have reduced more noticeably. This approach helps pupils attend more regularly and reduces the proportion of pupils identified as persistently absent. These improvements indicate that strategies are addressing barriers to attendance with increasing effectiveness.

A notable strength of the provision is the well-coordinated multi-agency support that underpins attendance improvement. Leaders working collaboratively with local authority officers have secured the full-time support of the Education Inclusion Officer. This support along with the, Education Welfare Officer, the PRU's Designated Safeguarding Person and the additional learning needs coordinator is instrumental in securing sustainable improvements. Beneficial weekly meetings ensure that staff share information

systematically and purposefully, allowing them to identify concerns early. In response, staff implement timely and well-coordinated interventions, which support pupils and their families effectively and contribute positively to improved attendance.

At secondary level, pupils participate in a range of well-being activities each afternoon that they help to shape and engage with willingly. Pupils in the primary phase experience a more structured and stimulating curriculum. These developments are increasing pupils' engagement and sense of belonging. As a result, pupils demonstrate greater motivation to attend regularly, which supports the improvement in attendance.

Leaders have substantially strengthened their strategic oversight of exclusion information. They analyse patterns across cohorts strategically and respond with well-considered pastoral and therapeutic support. Staff increasingly apply trauma-informed approaches, which deepen their understanding of pupils' needs and circumstances. Consequently, both the number and duration of exclusions are reducing. This helps pupils remain engaged in learning and supports the overall improvement in attendance.

Leaders evaluate their work thoughtfully and realistically. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the next steps for improvement, particularly in further refining the analysis of attendance and exclusion information. Leaders also recognise opportunities to align policies more closely with national guidance and streamline operational procedures to support consistent practice. This careful reflection places leaders in a strong position to sustain and extend the improvements already achieved.

Overall, improvements in attendance reflect purposeful leadership, secure monitoring arrangements, effective collaboration with external partners and a more engaging curriculum offer. Together, these developments have a beneficial and increasingly measurable impact on pupils' attendance and engagement at the PRU.

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