



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

A report on

Bryn Y Deryn Pupil Referral Unit

**Mynachdy Centre
Cefn Road
Mynachdy
Cardiff
CF14 3HS**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

About Bryn Y Deryn Pupil Referral Unit

Name of provider	Bryn Y Deryn PRU
Type of school/PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
Proprietor	Cardiff City Council
Age range	14 - 18
Boarding/Residential provision?	No
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	74
Pupils of statutory school age	62
Number in nursery classes	0
Number in sixth form	7
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs	100% 12 statemented – 17%
Date of headteacher appointment	2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	September 2016
Start date of inspection	9.5.2022
Additional information	

Overview

Bryn y Deryn PRU effectively provides a wide range of worthwhile learning opportunities for pupils as they plan for their pathways to further education, training or employment.

Leaders have a clear vision for the PRU and together with staff have created a calm and nurturing learning environment where pupils feel highly valued. The working relationships between staff and pupils are highly effective and this promotes a culture of respect at the PRU. Staff know the needs of their pupils extremely well, and are skilful in supporting pupils to make progress, academically, socially and emotionally. As a result, many pupils make strong progress from when they join the PRU.

Pupils benefit from the purposeful focus on well-being. This has been particularly important in addressing the increased mental health and emotional needs of pupils as a result of the pandemic. Staff and leaders demonstrate high resilience to the challenges the pandemic placed on the PRU and its pupils. They have shown flexibility and creativity to provide pupils with the necessary skills and qualifications they need for their future destinations.

Pupils experience a wide range of academic, vocational and personal development opportunities at the PRU. These experiences allow pupils to gain qualifications which effectively support their next steps well.

Leaders accurately identify key areas for improvement. These improvements support the PRU to make progress successfully. The attendance of pupils continues to be a challenge faced by the PRU. This is in part related to the impact of the pandemic, but leaders also recognise the need to improve the engagement of pupils who continue to be persistent non-attenders. Equally leaders have recognised the need to improve development of all pupils' Welsh language skills.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the PRU strategies to monitor and improve pupil attendance
- R2 Improve the provision and development of all pupils' Welsh language skills
- R3 Improve the opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

Over time many pupils make strong progress in their learning from their starting points and in relation to their needs and abilities. This is due to the beneficial support and encouragement they receive from teaching staff. Nearly all pupils respond well to the PRU's effective behaviour support strategies which enable them to access learning and to develop the independent, social and life skills they will need in future life. However, attendance issues continue to impact on the rate of progress of a minority of learners.

Across the PRU many pupils engage well in learning activities and make suitable progress within lessons and intervention sessions. They build successfully on prior learning to develop key skills.

Many pupils listen attentively to staff and to their peers and follow instructions confidently. For example, in science, pupils follow step by step instructions in an experiment to look at convection currents in a liquid. Pupils are respectful and provide encouragement to each other. The supportive ethos creates a nurturing space where pupils feel confident to express themselves. For example, in drama pupils perform in front of their peers and respond to their feedback confidently. Many pupils respond assuredly to questions and politely in conversations with visitors to the PRU.

Many pupils develop appropriate reading skills, in line with their ability, to access a range of texts. They can skim and scan texts and can locate information effectively. More able pupils use inference and deduction to draw conclusions accurately, for example when reflecting on the experience of a refugee family. Many pupils enjoy reading a range of genres such as factually based materials and science fiction. Pupils on the reading intervention programme make strong progress in their reading skills over time.

The standards of writing across the PRU are appropriate for the age and ability of pupils. Many pupils develop their independent writing skills progressively. They develop their understanding and write for a variety of different purposes. For example, in science pupils write letters explaining why vaccination is important. In a joint art and English project pupils write sensitively about their self-portraits.

Many pupils use their mathematical skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with increasing confidence and can explain their methods and their reasoning. In addition, they develop their numeracy skills suitably within a range of meaningful contexts. For example, pupils use measuring skills accurately when weighing ingredients in food technology or when measuring wood for the outside shelter. Pupils calculate hourly rates of work from salaried jobs and the costs of payday loans, and consider shutter speeds to create motion in photography.

Many pupils make appropriate use of ICT to support their learning. For example, pupils prepare power points and practise their subject skills in online games to

enhance their learning and understanding. However, generally, pupils across the PRU do not develop their ICT skills progressively to support their learning.

Pupils that join the PRU from Welsh medium education make assured progress in first language qualifications. However, pupils' understanding and use of Welsh as a second language is underdeveloped.

Pupils' creative skills are a notable strength at the PRU. They are encouraged to express themselves and their emotions through art and drama. The artwork produced by a few pupils is of exceptional quality, which is reflected in their GCSE results. Their artwork is proudly displayed across the buildings of the PRU.

Many pupils develop their thinking skills appropriately. For example, in media studies pupils consider how contemporary music influences mood and social change. Many pupils develop effective social skills. In lessons they work successfully in small groups and respond appropriately to contributions made by other pupils. They are supportive and considerate of others' needs. Many pupils improve their physical skills well. For example, pupils enjoy fitness sessions in the gym, orienteering and biking to improve their physical fitness and confidence. Nearly all pupils achieve a range of accreditation in areas that reflect their abilities and interests well. This includes Entry levels, BTECs, Level 1 and 2 awards, GCSE and AS level.

In the academic year 2020-2021, many pupils leaving in Key Stage 4 progressed into education, training or employment. However, as a result of the pandemic, a few did not access provision available to them.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

There is an exemplary culture and ethos of supporting well-being across the PRU. Nearly all pupils consistently engage with the established and consistent routines in morning pastoral time. The positive staff and pupil working relationships during this time develop a family approach that allows pupils to self-regulate. Nearly all pupils review and act upon purposeful targets for improvement during this time. As a consequence, nearly all pupils are punctual to lessons, are able to settle quickly into learning situations and demonstrate exemplary behaviour in lessons.

Behaviour across the PRU is of a very high standard. Data on exclusions over a three-year period shows a declining trend in the average number of days lost due to exclusion, with only a very few pupils in 2020-2021 receiving one fixed term exclusion. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in and around the PRU with incidents of bullying being a rare occurrence. Many pupils improve their behaviour, confidence and resilience as a direct consequence of the pastoral support and specialist interventions that are used extremely well across the PRU.

For pupils who attend on a regular basis, participation and enjoyment in learning is a notable strength. A minority of pupils engage in the wide variety of after school clubs that are provided by staff enthusiastically. Given the range of pupil needs, this engagement is well above expectations. After school clubs are learner led based on pupils' personal interests and expectations. For example, pupils enjoy developing circus skills through their drama club and exercising in the gym.

Pupil engagement in creative arts is powerful. For example, pupils produce highly creative self-portraits to illustrate improvements in their own mental health. Pupils develop their confidence well through drama productions, including most recently "An Arm's Length Apart", a play that was written, produced and performed by pupils.

Many pupils speak enthusiastically about the various off-site learning opportunities where pupils engage in a variety of practical activities including motorbike maintenance, first aid training, ice skating and archery. However, for a majority of pupils their engagement with these new and unfamiliar experiences is challenging.

All pupils are able to make healthy choices relating to diet from the comprehensive healthy breakfast and lunch menu provided on-site. Pupils successfully develop their knowledge in food and nutrition GCSE and English lessons where pupils have the opportunity to learn about the importance of diet and lifestyles. A minority of pupils further extended their knowledge of healthy eating through their attendance at a food and fitness summer school based at the PRU.

Many pupils feel that staff ask what they think about the PRU, and leaders listen to their suggestions and sometimes make changes when they ask. The school council is purposeful and meets regularly to discuss standing items on the agenda and matters raised by fellow pupils. Pupils on the school council have used their voice to support the refurbishment of the well-being room by creating a mood chart and decorating the room. They also contribute to the development of the outdoor learning areas with new equipment bought such as trampolines and swings, the school garden and shelter project.

A few pupils take on purposeful leadership roles and responsibilities in the PRU including head gardener, head librarian, head of year, school council leader, head boy / head girl and head person. Pupils' backgrounds, sexuality and preferred use of non-binary terms are respected across the PRU.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the PRU's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Nearly all staff foster positive and valuable professional working relationships with their pupils. They understand and respond to their pupils' additional learning and emotional needs exceptionally well. For example, during lessons they support pupils sensitively and calmly with consistent classroom routines, which help pupils to understand and predict what is happening around them. The strong focus on well-being and a trauma-based approach across the PRU supports many pupils well to make valuable progress in their learning. In addition, it strongly supports their social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The PRU provides pupils with an appropriate range of relevant learning experiences including opportunities for academic, vocational, and personal development. However, the current vocational curriculum offer is not matched well enough to the needs of all pupils.

The PRU has an effective wide-ranging programme of personal and social education that is delivered jointly by teachers and external providers. This includes support and guidance on important areas such as sex and relationships education, online safety, and the benefits of a healthy diet and regular exercise.

In addition, the PRU offers a very wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities that further enrich pupils' learning experiences and support wellbeing. These include football, gym, dance, debate, singing, drama and art clubs.

Planning in all areas of the PRU includes appropriate consideration of the four purposes for learning, as well as integrating the delivery of valuable skills such as literacy and numeracy. The PRU is well resourced and has increased the use of ICT within lessons. This includes the use of virtual reality in science lessons to "visit" other planets. However, teachers do not provide pupils with enough planned opportunities to develop their digital competence skills progressively across the curriculum. Most staff use Welsh as part of their daily pastoral programme. However, Welsh language and culture do not have a suitable prominence in teachers' planning and delivery of the curriculum.

Most teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage and motivate pupils in their lessons. They set an appropriate pace to the learning and have high expectations of nearly all pupils. They use a variety of activities and tailor these to meet the needs of individual pupils effectively.

Teachers have a strong understanding of what pupils need to become successful learners and reach their future goals. Individual pupil progress is tracked, evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis by all staff. This enables teachers to share progress and successes, identify areas for additional support and plan securely for the next steps in learning.

Nearly all teachers provide pupils with regular feedback. They provide pupils with appropriate written feedback that identifies good features. In most cases pupils respond more favourably to staff verbal feedback and respond in a timely manner to this information. This enables pupils to successfully improve their work. A majority of teachers and pupils make purposeful use of peer and self-assessment.

Care, support and guidance

All staff know the pupils extremely well and support them effectively in their learning and well-being. The PRU has a clear and robust behaviour management policy and a range of supportive strategies that are used consistently by all staff. This promotes a calm and nurturing atmosphere that aids pupil learning well.

Comprehensive assessments on entry to the PRU, alongside effective liaison with partner schools and agencies, allow staff to identify and plan well for the individual learning and well-being needs of pupils. These initial assessments feed into a valuable record of achievement document. Progress is tracked effectively across all areas of achievement including engagement, progress against targets and career aspirations. In addition, "learner journey" documents support planning for next steps in learning or development, with a focus on careers and post-16 options. Nearly all pupils make good progress in meeting their targets.

The extensive pastoral programme used in the PRU follows a trauma-based approach and includes beneficial elements such as recognising emotions and links to the United Nations rights of the child. These worthwhile morning pastoral sessions with staff offer pupils a valuable opportunity to prepare for the day ahead, have the opportunity for a healthy breakfast and complete creative activities linked to the theme of the week. Examples include celebrating International Nurses Day with mindfulness activities and learning how to “let it go” with well-being balloons.

The PRU provides excellent support and guidance to nearly all pupils in preparing for their next steps in life. It has a wide range of high-quality relationships with external agencies and partners, which effectively support the pupils in making informed choices about their next steps. Strong partnerships with the careers adviser and local colleges are underpinned by the support offered to pupils through the youth service transition programme. This supports pupils well as they transition from the PRU through the summer period to their next destination.

The PRU maintains effective and regular communication links with parents and carers and weekly phone calls provide an excellent opportunity to discuss progress against targets and celebrate success. The PRU has strengthened reports to parents to show more clearly where progress has been made and where there may be areas to improve. In addition, the PRU values and encourages comments and feedback from parents and has added a QR code to reports to facilitate this.

There is a consistent process across the PRU for staff to respond to pupil absence. This includes contact with parents on the first day of absence, home visits and close liaison with specialist agencies such as the education welfare service. However, these interventions are currently having little impact on pupils who are persistently absent. In addition, the recording of attendance is not always accurate across the provision.

The provision to safeguard pupils at the PRU is extremely effective. Leaders promote safeguarding as a high priority for all staff, pupils and members of the management committee. As a result, safeguarding is understood by all to be their responsibility. This promotes a robust culture of safeguarding, which is integral to all parts of the PRU day.

All members of staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to any safeguarding concerns. This is strongly complimented by the underpinning trauma informed practice across the PRU.

Processes for reporting concerns are clearly understood by all staff. A well-established electronic multi-agency system provides a single point of reporting for staff. This allows the designated safeguarding leads to access information, progress and track referrals to children’s services and successfully monitor all concerns to identify trends and patterns in referrals.

Designated safeguarding leads have strong links with a range of agencies to support pupil needs. For example, links with the local authority safeguarding team are well established and allow for effective joint working. This includes the joint completion of the annual safeguarding audit at the PRU. The PRU has appropriate procedures in place to promote, track and challenge attendance issues. Targeted support and

intervention is available for identified pupils whose persistent non-attendance is identified as part of the safeguarding process. Addressing pupil attendance issues continues to be an area for ongoing improvement.

Leaders and staff have established an ethos where pupils feel safe and are listened to. Pupil school council meetings have safeguarding as a standing agenda item. Pupils use these forums effectively to share concerns and raise awareness amongst staff and peers.

The personal, social and education curriculum develops pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is delivered through a multi-agency approach co-ordinated by the PRU. Key messages for pupils are reinforced across the curriculum and pastoral time to further support pupil awareness and understanding. These approaches effectively support pupils to develop the skills they need to stay safe and make more informed choices.

The PRU's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The head of centre provides strong leadership at the PRU. Her commitment and dedication to continually improve provision for pupils is exemplary. The head of centre, acting deputy and acting assistant head of centre have worked together effectively to lead the PRU through the challenges presented by the pandemic. This includes the highly effective development of provision for Year 12 pupils in the Carnegie Centre in 2020-2021. There is a clear vision for the PRU, which is shared successfully with pupils, staff, parents and external agencies.

Senior leaders have overarching areas of responsibility to securely progress strategic improvements. These are effectively linked to the PRU improvement priorities. Based on rigorous quality assurance processes, leaders identify the PRU's strengths and areas for development accurately. A continuous cycle of self-evaluation, which involves all stakeholders including pupils, is in place to effectively monitor progress towards identified improvement priorities. This informs department action plans and ensures improvements support pupil progress.

There is a useful cycle of monitoring, evaluation and reporting in place. Although disrupted by the pandemic, termly lesson observations provide beneficial opportunities for professional dialogue, to share good practice and effectively identify professional learning requirements. Quality assurance of provision is regularly reviewed to reflect the changing needs of the cohorts of pupils attending the PRU. Leaders have identified the necessary changes required to the vocational offer to ensure that it meets the needs of the current cohort of pupils and improve attendance levels. Performance management processes are well established and robust.

Leaders across the PRU are highly visible. They act as positive role models for pupils and provide highly effective support for staff. Together, leaders and staff successfully work to promote a strong culture of safeguarding, ensuring that the PRU provides a safe and nurturing community that competently meets the diverse and complex

needs of its pupils well. This culture is further strengthened by the embedded trauma informed practice and ethos, which is evident across all aspects of the provision.

The head of centre values staff well-being and recognises the importance of this to deliver trauma informed practices successfully to meet the needs of pupils. She has established effective strategies to support staff well-being. These include the provision of a staff well-being room and access to an on-site counselling service. Investment by the head of centre both financially and in time to support staff well-being is highly beneficial. The impact of this is evident in the high levels of trust and respect between staff and pupils.

Leaders benefit from a purposeful working relationship with the local authority. For example, the establishment of provision for Year 12 pupils was originally a short-term measure in response to the impact of the pandemic on pupils gaining relevant qualifications to access post PRU placements. The evaluation of the provision was extremely positive and highly valued by pupils and parents. The local authority have recognised the important role this provision provides for pupils and the head of centre has successfully secured longer term funding to continue the provision.

Since recently coming under the line management of the head of centre there have been significant improvements in the service delivery for hospital tuition. These include professional learning opportunities for staff, strengthened working relationships with schools and increased resources. These are improving the quality of teaching and learning for children and young people to continue their education during their time in hospital.

Members of the management committee offer a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to support their roles as committee members. They have a sound understanding of the PRU's strengths and areas for development and provide valuable support and challenge to the head of centre. Sub committees for attendance and behaviour, finance and curriculum allow members to have a deeper understanding of these areas, often co-opting key PRU staff to join meetings to work with members. These sub groups effectively feed back to the management committee.

Professional learning is well planned and is carefully aligned to meet the PRU's priorities for improvement. All staff access a wide range of professional learning. This includes trauma informed practices to diploma level, autism awareness, phonological awareness and neurodiversity. In a few cases teaching support staff progress to initial teacher training.

The head of centre manages the budget effectively. Working collaboratively with the local authority finance officer and management committee, robust financial arrangements are in place that link successfully to the PRU's priorities.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school/PRU and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/management committee, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's/PRU's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school/PRU clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's/PRU's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's/PRU's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school/PRU has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school/PRU documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body/management committee, information on pupils' well-being, 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 school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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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