



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

A report on

**Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit
Canolfan Aeron
Portland Place
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 0AX**

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by

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

About Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit

Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit is part of Ceredigion local education authority's provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. Most pupils have special educational needs. All pupils either have a statement of special educational needs or a 'school action plus agreement' in a specialist resource provision.

Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit is registered with the Welsh Government as a 'portfolio' pupil referral unit. The unit is located across three sites, namely Canolfan yr Eos in Aberystwyth, Canolfan Bro Steffan in Cribyn and Canolfan Aeron in Aberaeron. Plans are underway to relocate Canolfan Bro Steffan to a more suitable site during this academic year.

One management board oversees the pupil referral unit (PRU), and it has an integrated line management structure. Twenty pupils receive full-time education at the PRU. The PRU also provides an outreach service for around 30 mainstream pupils in Ceredigion. The PRU provides a support and advice service on specific aspects of positive behaviour support for schools within the authority.

The aim of the PRU is to enable all pupils to return to mainstream education and/or further education, training or employment. All pupils receive full-time education, either at the PRU or through a shared arrangement with a mainstream school, college, training provider or employment.

Twenty five per cent (25%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and a minority are looked after children. No pupils are learning English as an additional language.

The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2020. He has previous experience of leading key stage 3 and of leading at the PRU's other centres. He is the acting headteacher of all sites and all behaviour support staff who work in schools across the authority. There is also a teacher in charge at Canolfan Eos and Canolfan Aeron.

Summary

During their time at the pupil referral unit (PRU), many pupils make strong progress in their social, emotional and behavioural skills, and their ability to work with adults and their peers. As a result, nearly all pupils who receive a support service in the mainstream in key stage 2, and most pupils who attend the key stage 3 site, return to mainstream education successfully.

Most pupils show pride and report eloquently on the learning experiences that they receive and how the learning environment has a positive effect on them and their self-confidence. As they work with adults and other pupils at the alternative sites, many pupils make sound progress from their starting points and develop valuable practical skills, for example in construction, food preparation and hairdressing.

A majority of pupils make sound progress in their subject knowledge and understanding, and in their literacy and number skills. However, a few pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not achieve to the best of their ability as there are not enough opportunities for them to extend and practise their writing skills and higher order reading skills.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' standards, particularly in their extended writing skills, higher order reading skills, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that best practice is shared across the three sites
- R3 Strengthen planning to develop skills and ensure increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and give more attention to developing the most able pupils
- R4 Improve the rigour and effectiveness of quality improvement processes in order to strengthen provision and raise standards

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the PRU to prepare a case study on its work in relation to support for pupils to improve their behaviour, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Pupils receive a service from Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit because they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Often, but not always, they have received numerous fixed-term exclusions while in their mainstream schools. During their time at the PRU, many pupils make valuable progress in developing social skills and self-confidence while correcting their behaviour.

In lessons, many pupils make strong progress in their oracy skills. In class discussions, they are confident and willing to share their views and give meaningful responses to staff and their fellow pupils. A few pupils discuss maturely and purposefully, for example when discussing their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl and Michael Morpurgo. Pupils with profound emotional difficulties make very strong progress from their starting points in oracy skills. This is a strong feature. Pupils who follow alternative courses discuss the process of constructing walls confidently and make appropriate use of technical vocabulary. In Welsh lessons, a majority of pupils develop a good range of vocabulary when gathering facts, while listening to native Welsh speakers talk about their leisure time.

On the whole, many pupils develop sound reading skills across the PRU. Most acquire information and gather facts successfully when reading a wide range of texts. Many research topics confidently on the internet. For example, in English lessons, pupils research purposefully by reading articles on the internet in order to create an oral presentation on the life and work of rap artists. By developing their reading skills, they come to understand better how culture, music, history and poverty can influence what these artists write about.

A majority of pupils strengthen their ability to analyse and consider effect by studying appropriate pieces of literary work. For example, they study a few poems and come to a conclusion about the effect of phraseology on the reader, or consider events in the novel, 'Holes'. However, a few pupils have weak reading skills and are reluctant to read for pleasure. Due to the lack of opportunities, most pupils' higher order reading skills are underdeveloped.

Overall, many pupils make appropriate progress in their writing skills. They have a good grasp of vocabulary and syntax. They organise their written work sensibly in paragraphs, and give due consideration to punctuation. The quality of spelling is good, overall. However, a few pupils make regular spelling and grammatical errors and misuse capital letters.

A majority of pupils convey information clearly in writing with an appropriate range of subject-specific vocabulary. For example, they present information about the negative effect of drugs as part of the substance misuse course. However, a few pupils present very short written pieces and do not give detailed enough attention to the accuracy or the presentation of their work.

In a narrow range of purposes, a majority of pupils make suitable progress in their independent writing skills. For example, they practise persuasive technique and

effect when presenting an extended piece of writing that considers the advantages and disadvantages of eating meat, and consider the effect of the meat-selling trade on the environment. When they are given opportunities to do so, around half of pupils use their writing skills productively to create descriptions and express their feelings. For example, in personal and social education (PSE) lessons, they write fluently when considering the effect of negative feelings and how to transform them into positive feelings. In Welsh, many make purposeful use of their knowledge of how to form verbs in the past tense in order to create a personal diary. However, across the PRU, pupils, particularly those who are most able, do not progress as well as they could in their independent and extended writing skills.

Overall, most pupils make sound development in their number skills across the PRU. They use the four number rules confidently to solve everyday problems. For example, they analyse basic wages and additional hours, or calculate the true cost of paying for a television through monthly payments in comparison with making one full payment. Many work confidently with simple fractions and equations. They handle data skilfully, for example to identify weather patterns when looking at temperature data in different parts of the United Kingdom. Many understand the basics of accurate line graphs and record data correctly on axes. A majority of pupils calculate angles and circumference skilfully, and complete simple algebra equations. However, pupils, particularly those who are most able, do not always reach their full potential in mathematics and numeracy because of the lack of opportunities to complete more challenging work.

On the whole, a majority of pupils make appropriate progress in their ICT skills in a narrow range of suitable areas.

A majority of pupils make suitable development in their thinking skills. For example, in Welsh lessons, they recall vocabulary, syntax and grammatical rules successfully in order to prepare a presentation when studying the theme 'My Square Mile'. Pupils solve problems enthusiastically when considering changes in energy and calculating speed by creating a model of a rollercoaster.

Many pupils develop valuable creative skills in a wide range of purposeful situations. For example, they cook food of a high standard, create attractive pieces of art such as felt masks, and produce Christmas decorations. A majority of pupils strengthen their physical skills through outdoor activities, weekly visits to the gymnasium and through yoga sessions.

The PRU provides access to a wide range of appropriate qualifications for key stage 4 pupils. Over the last four years, a majority of these pupils have succeeded in gaining suitable level 2 qualifications in the core subjects and in occupational courses. It is not appropriate to compare their performance with that of similar pupils in other pupil referral units. Similarly, it is not appropriate to compare the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals with the performance of similar pupils in other pupil referral units.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils who receive a service from the PRU develop as confident and sociable individuals. Nearly all foster and develop trust and a valuable relationship with

adults. Most develop resilience and valuable social skills. As a result, a minority of pupils return to the mainstream successfully. The remainder succeed in keeping their place in the PRU, gain suitable qualifications and move on to further education, training or employment. This is a strong feature.

Nearly all pupils feel safe at the PRU and know whom to approach if they need support. They trust the adults who support and teach them, and foster a constructive relationship with them. Most pupils develop a strong awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise. They understand how making unwise decisions can affect their wellbeing and their mental and physical health. For example, pupils discuss maturely the dangers of energy drinks and foods that contain high levels of sugar and fat. Most pupils know how to stay safe online and understand the dangers of inappropriate online relationships. They develop a very sound understanding of the basics of healthy and positive relationships.

Most pupils are welcoming and respectful towards unfamiliar adults and visitors. In their lessons and around the sites, many behave very well. They show respect and appreciation towards the staff who teach and support them. During their time at the PRU, most develop a sound understanding of how behaviours affect people's lives. Many make beneficial changes to their behaviour and develop appropriate maturity as they grow into young adults. As a result of improvements in their behaviour, these pupils gain the right to take part in the 'Winter Wellbeing Week' and 'Summer Wellbeing Week'. During these weeks, they develop self-confidence and resilience when facing challenges, such as high rope challenges or coastal activities.

Many pupils develop valuable social skills while taking part in community activities, such as organising coffee morning to raise money for charity, or to raise money to improve facilities at the PRU. Many pupils develop beneficial co-operation skills by leading and shouldering responsibilities. A notable example of this is the prominent part that pupils play in the Christmas service at the Holy Trinity Church in Aberaeron, which is organised for parents and carers, and the local community.

The school council's work is developing suitably. Through the council, pupils express their views on the life and work of the PRU, and make valid suggestions for preferred activities. The council has very recently had an appropriate influence on the content of their cross-curricular themes, such as the theme of 'Let's celebrate' for the autumn term.

The attendance of pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 3 has been robust over time. The attendance of pupils in key stage 4 has varied over the last three years. A very few pupils' attitudes to learning are less favourable and have a negative effect on their attendance and their willingness to achieve. This year, unverified attendance data shows that pupils' attendance across the PRU has improved in comparison with the same period last year. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions has remained similar over the last three years, it is low considering the nature of provision and individual pupils' needs. No pupils have been excluded permanently over the last three years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Staff at the PRU forge an exceptionally strong working relationship with the pupils in their care. All staff know their pupils well and are aware of their backgrounds and difficulties, and what motivates and worries them. They recognise the challenges that individual pupils face and succeed in creating a highly caring environment for them across all sites. This means that many pupils participate actively in activities and persevere well in their lessons.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. A strong feature of the staff's work is the way in which they manage the balance between giving support and independence to pupils in a sensitive and sensible manner. By doing so, they prepare pupils successfully to cope independently outside the PRU or when they return to mainstream education.

Many teachers provide stimulating lessons and activities that are well-planned. They use a range of appropriate resources to engage pupils' interest and enrich learning. For example, spray paints are used effectively in art activities in order to motivate pupils to create pieces of artwork of a high standard.

Many teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. They also encourage pupils to reflect carefully on their learning and behaviour regularly.

Many teachers provide purposeful oral feedback on pupils' work. They give them credit and praise for their good effort and achievement and, overall, provide appropriate suggestions on how to improve work. Where appropriate, teachers provide suitable written feedback to support learning further.

On the whole, many teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills across the curriculum. In the best practice, tasks allow pupils to develop these skills successfully. However, there is inconsistency in the way in which teachers plan for pupils' gradual development in skills, particularly in literacy and ICT. As a result, provision does not meet all pupils' needs, particularly those who are most able. Recent strategic planning to develop skills is detailed, comprehensive and includes input from the whole learning team. They seek pupils' views and ideas in relation to the themes, and include them as much as possible when planning. However, it is too early to measure the effect of this recent planning on pupils' standards.

The PRU's staff are successful in organising and providing courses that meet individual pupils' needs in key stage 4. In addition to provision for core subjects, the PRU works closely with local secondary schools and an alternative training centre to provide interesting and useful courses for pupils. This includes blacksmithing studies, motor mechanics, hairdressing courses and construction. The wide range of courses that is available provides valuable opportunities for pupils to pursue a course that appeals to them, and provides opportunities for them to succeed and achieve well. This helps most pupils to develop the skills, confidence and self-respect necessary to return successfully to education in mainstream schools or move on to further education, training or employment.

The PRU's provision to develop pupils' social skills is a strength. Teachers and support staff provide valuable and regular opportunities for pupils to study and reflect on important contemporary issues, such as relationship and sexuality education, and children's rights. This is done through valuable daily assemblies and personal and social education lessons that are planned effectively across the sites. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop beneficial life skills through sessions at the local gymnasium, lifesaving courses and cooking sessions. These activities are of great benefit to pupils and prepare them well for life once they have left the PRU.

The PRU has a valuable relationship with a wide and comprehensive range of local companies that provide work experience for the unit's pupils. By doing so, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to develop their social skills in real-life situations and gain experience of opportunities in the world of work. These include dog grooming, working with builders' merchants, working in a local supermarket and in catering.

The PRU provides lessons and courses through the medium of Welsh and English, depending on pupils' academic background. Teachers ensure that pupils learn about Welsh culture and heritage meaningfully. A good example of this is the activities leading up to St David's Day, when pupils write poetry, make Welsh cakes and recycle plastic bottles to create daffodils. They also take part in Urdd activities and visit Llangrannog. Most staff use the Welsh language with pupils regularly, which ensures that pupils are given beneficial opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. This is a strong feature.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit is a highly caring community that provides valuable support and guidance for pupils. The PRU also provides a very effective advice service to staff at mainstream schools on how to support pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties across Ceredigion. This inclusive and supportive ethos promotes pupils' health and wellbeing successfully. Staff identify pupils' individual needs very well and respond to them successfully.

The school has effective strategies and procedures in order to track, monitor and promote pupils' attendance, wellbeing and behaviour. Wellbeing data is used purposefully to identify and target pupils who need support with their attendance or attitudes to learning, and provide purposeful intervention for them. However, arrangements for tracking pupils' subject progress and achievement over time are not robust enough. This reduces pupils' ability to plan in detail for pupils' increasing development in their skills, particularly those who are more able.

The PRU maintains a valuable and useful professional relationship with external agencies to provide pupils with purposeful and beneficial support. This includes working with children's services, youth workers, health staff and the careers officer, in order to provide pupils with valuable career and educational advice.

The PRU has effective processes when a pupil transfers from school or returns to school. Leaders interact successfully to ensure that arrangements are smooth and supportive. This ensures better outcomes in terms of pupils' wellbeing and behaviour.

All pupils have an appropriate individual education plan. Staff use comprehensive information about pupils in order to produce purposeful targets in these plans to improve their behaviour and participation. However, targets to raise individual pupils' standards of achievement have not been incorporated in full. The PRU tracks pupils' progress against their wellbeing targets suitably and regularly. Parents and carers, and pupils themselves, play a central part in reviewing progress and setting targets through the annual reviews.

Staff communicate well with parents and carers, and support them very beneficially for pupils' wellbeing. They use e-mail, text messages and social media extensively to share information and celebrate pupils' success. Parents and carers receive valuable and specific information about their children's effort and progress through a full annual report. However, advice on the next steps in terms of pupils' academic progress is not consistent enough within reports.

The PRU provides valuable opportunities for pupils to improve their fitness and understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. A beneficial personal and social education programme and morning assemblies contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through these, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding and respect for equality and diversity. An appropriate range of beneficial activities, such as yoga and art therapy, help pupils learn how to relax and express their feelings successfully.

The programme of extra-curricular activities and the alternative curriculum help pupils to develop important life skills. For example, pupils develop their co-operation skills effectively through visits to the local fire station or by hiking along the coast.

The PRU's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision, and has set a purposeful aim and strategic objectives for the PRU. He has high expectations in terms of all aspects of the service's work. Despite being appointed very recently, his motivational leadership has ensured a strong spirit of co-operation between all staff. They have responded well to the recent appropriate re-organisation and are wholly committed to the PRU's work and the motto, 'Every child matters'.

There are appropriate arrangements to share leadership and responsibilities across the PRU, and lines of accountability are clear. This dynamic model enables staff to work across the PRU's sites and ensure that pupils are given the same opportunities and learning experiences.

High quality communication across the PRU's portfolio is a strong feature of its work. A pattern of regular meetings is scheduled in order for staff to discuss pupils' progress in wellbeing, and plan and evaluate provision. Nearly all staff understand their role in relation to pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The appointment of the headteacher is very recent and, as a result, the strategic evaluation of areas for improvement is in its very early stages. Leaders' evaluation of

the PRU's work has not yet been developed in full, and evaluations do not identify areas for improvement well enough in relation to teaching and learning. Leaders use first-hand evidence appropriately in order to evaluate their work. They undertake a suitable range of monitoring activities, including data analysis, listening to learners and scrutinising pupils' work. However, they do not focus enough on the quality of pupils' work in key areas, such as reading, writing and numeracy. Despite these shortcomings, leaders have an appropriate knowledge of the PRU's strengths and allocate resources purposefully to support further improvement, for example by using funding from the pupil development grant to provide trauma therapy.

The management board supports the PRU very well. Members have a wide range of beneficial skills and professional expertise to support their work. Leaders provide the management board with comprehensive information about the PRU's work. This enables them to challenge and question the PRU about its performance, for example on issues such as attendance. Members of the board develop their ability to challenge and support the PRU's leaders suitably in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

Staff at the PRU have ambitious expectations for pupils. There is a strong aspiration to increase learning experiences and improve pupils' wellbeing. Staff development plans link directly to current performance management targets. There is an effective programme to develop staff through purposeful training and professional support to improve their practice. Nearly all members of staff use professional learning very effectively to improve their own practice and the practice of others, which includes training new teachers. A strong feature of this is the consistency in the way in which staff manage and promote good behaviour among pupils effectively.

The headteacher, with support from the local authority, deals effectively with any underperforming staff, when necessary.

Leaders have a clear understanding and a suitable influence in terms of using and managing resources that are allocated by the local authority. Staff make the most of accommodation and resources, and create a comfortable and welcoming environment in which pupils can feel safe.

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 a broad sample of lessons 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 (where appropriate) and outdoor areas
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times, and in a sample of after-school clubs
- 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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