



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

**A report on**

**Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Service  
Hanbury House  
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Monmouthshire  
NP16 5LL**

**Date of inspection: April 2018**

**by**

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

## **About Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Service**

Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Services (PRS) is a pupil referral unit (PRU) maintained by Monmouthshire local authority. The PRS is accommodated on four sites, but with an integrated line management structure, and overseen by a single management committee. The service aims to return pupils to mainstream education, or support them into further education, training or employment.

The PRS provides education for pupils at key stages 2, 3 and 4 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This includes lessons at each of the four sites, a primary outreach service and home tuition service.

There are 43 pupils on roll. Many pupils are also registered at other mainstream schools. Around 10% of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Forty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A very few pupils are looked after by their local authority. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the main language.

Since 2016 there has been an acting teacher in charge of the PRS as the headteacher has been seconded by the local authority to lead a local special school.

## Summary

The PRS is successful in achieving its aims. Most pupils from across the service develop the skills and confidence they need to make a successful return to a local school, training provider or college of further education. Many make suitable progress in their learning in relation to their starting points, needs and abilities.

The quality of teaching across the PRS is good. Teachers plan carefully to provide learning experiences that meet the needs and aspirations of pupils well. Teaching has a strong focus on helping pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Staff have very good working relationships with pupils. They understand pupils' social and emotional needs well and manage challenging behaviour skilfully.

The PRS has formed effective partnerships with important stakeholders that have a beneficial impact on pupil outcomes and wellbeing. Senior leaders work together well. They have established clear aims for the service and provide a wide range of valuable opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills. However, the service's self-evaluation procedures are not robust enough and require improvement. They do not provide a firm enough basis to drive forward improvement in important areas such as pupil attendance and standards in literacy.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve self-evaluation and improvement planning
- R2 Improve pupils' attendance
- R3 Improve pupils' literacy skills
- R4 Ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to contribute their views
- R5 Develop the role of the management committee, so that they provide effective support and challenge

## **What happens next**

The PRU will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the PRU's progress.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Pupils who attend the Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Service have a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and many have difficulty in managing their behaviour in their mainstream schools. The majority of pupils start at the service with little confidence and have difficulty building trusting relationships with staff.

Many pupils respond well to the PRS's supportive ethos and the skilled interventions of staff. They make suitable progress in relation to their starting points, needs and abilities. Generally, pupils engage particularly well with vocational and work related activities, where they have more choice over what and how they study. However, a few pupils at key stage 4 do not engage positively and do not make enough progress in their learning.

Key stage 2 pupils at the primary site respond well to the nurturing approach and consistent boundaries. They make strong progress in following routines, managing their behaviour and learning through play. They are keen to tell visitors about their work and are proud of their achievements.

Most pupils from across the service develop the skills and confidence they need to make a successful return to a local school, training provider or college of further education. Last year 95% of leavers continued in full-time education, employment or training. In the current academic year, eight pupils have made successful transitions to other provisions.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the service with national averages, or to analyse the performance trends of groups over time because of the nature of the pupils' additional learning needs. Generally, across the PRS pupils complete more work, make better progress and have higher standards in their numeracy skills compared to their literacy skills.

Over the last three years, there is an increasing trend in the number and standards of qualifications that pupils achieve at key stage 4. Nearly all pupils leave the service with at least one nationally recognised qualification in courses that are generally well matched to their needs and abilities. These include valuable work-related courses and a small range of GCSEs. In 2017, nearly all Year 11 pupils left with a GCSE in both English and mathematics.

A majority of pupils demonstrate sound age appropriate number skills. They select appropriate methods for calculation and apply the four rules of number successfully to solve problems. Many pupils are able to collect data and display information in a small range of appropriate graphs and charts. A few older pupils who are more able are confident when analysing data and draw reasonable conclusions from information in line graphs, bar graphs and pie charts. Most pupils at key stage 4 have a sound knowledge of the properties of common two and three-dimensional shapes and can use their knowledge to calculate perimeter. Pupils that are more able extend their knowledge by calculating the area of compound shapes. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills well enough in other areas of the curriculum and do not practise these skills in real life situations.

Overall, around half of pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy skills. Most pupils listen well when working in a one to one situation, and respond sensibly to questions from staff and visitors. Many pupils express themselves clearly. A few pupils talk confidently about their hopes for the future, use subject specific vocabulary accurately and give reasons for their opinions.

Many pupils develop sound reading skills. They gather information from a wide range of texts to identify key information to draw conclusions. For example, in personal social education (PSE), they skim and scan texts to identify the key characteristics of good mental health and use this information to identify ways to keep safe.

Around half of pupils write coherently, organise their written work well and use punctuation accurately. These pupils take pride in the presentation of their written work. However, on the whole pupils provide only brief, underdeveloped written answers and a minority of pupils produce very little written work.

Many pupils make effective use of information and communication technology to research topics and present their work. For example, they use the internet and basic computer programmes to produce projects in vocational education on topics such as tourism in Wales and the suitability of work experience placements.

A majority of pupils at key stage 4 have sound independent learning skills, though they are less confident when working with in pairs and groups. A few pupils have a sound understanding of their strengths and areas for development. However, a few pupils are overly reliant on staff to direct their learning and manage their behaviour.

Around half of pupils at keys stage 4 develop useful social skills and self-esteem through their participation in work experience placements and attending courses at local colleges.

Overall, pupils across the PRS make limited progress in the development of their Welsh language skills.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement**

Many pupils feel safe and believe that there are very few incidences of bullying at the PRS. Most pupils know who they can go to if they are worried or concerned. Pupils at all centres build positive relationships with staff. This is a strong feature of the service. Many pupils are polite and demonstrate respect towards staff and each other. This ability to form trusting relationships helps most pupils to re-integrate successfully into mainstream school or make successful transitions to other provisions.

The majority of pupils develop their understanding of healthy eating and living well, through formal lessons and bespoke support and advice. For example, they create a balanced menu in cookery lessons, discuss the importance of exercise and describe the harms associated with substance misuse in personal social education (PSE) lessons. A few older pupils demonstrate an insightful understanding of their own mental health, and how to protect themselves. However, many older pupils do not put their understanding of what contributes to a healthy lifestyle into practice and currently only a few pupils take part in regular physical activity.

Many pupils give their opinions about their education and the work of the PRS through informal discussions with staff. For example, they choose the location of educational visits as part of a vocational programme and select which topics they want to focus on in revision sessions. However, pupils do not have leadership roles within the PRS and do not express their views on their own progress and the provision made for them by the service.

Overall, attendance at the PRS is too low. For around half of the pupils, attendance rates at the PRS is below what it was in their mainstream schools. Of those pupils who do attend more regularly, many arrive at the PRS punctually and are ready to learn. The majority remain for the whole session.

Most pupils demonstrate good standards of behaviour. Many engage well in lessons, and are able to seek support when they encounter difficulties. There have been no fixed term exclusions across the PRS this year and only one fixed term exclusion in the last three years.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

The PRS provides a suitable range of valuable learning experiences that helps nearly all pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they need to make a successful reintegration into mainstream education, work based learning or further education.

The curriculum for primary age pupils has an appropriate focus on developing pupils' confidence, their ability to work with others and to follow routines. The provision enables pupils to learn through structured play activities and is successful in helping pupils to make progress with their communication, social skills and behaviour.

The curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 has a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through daily English and mathematics lessons. A small range of interesting practical and vocational options provides pupils with a limited choice over what and how they learn. These courses help pupils to develop important research skills and take responsibility for their own learning.

Strong strategic partnerships between the PRS and local schools and colleges enable pupils to access courses and specialist teaching facilities elsewhere in the community. This gives breadth to the curriculum and enriches pupils' learning experiences. For example, pupils at the primary PRS benefit from being based at a local mainstream school where they have use of the sensory room, library and outside learning areas. Pupils at key stage 4 access relevant courses in subjects such as animal care and agriculture at a local further education college. The PRS has established valuable links with a small range of local work-based learning providers to develop appropriate learning pathways for pupils at key stage 4.

The PRS has recently invested in ICT equipment to improve the delivery of the digital competency framework. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on the quality of pupils' learning experiences.

Generally, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and develop creative and physical skills.

Overall, the quality of teaching at the PRS is good.

Staff across the PRS have very good working relationships with the pupils. They understand pupils' social and emotional needs well and provide them with regular praise and encouragement. This helps the majority of pupils to remain engaged in lessons and to persevere with tasks. Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviour skilfully and respond sensitively when pupils are finding things difficult.

Teachers' plan well for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills systematically. Across the PRS teachers plan lessons carefully. Lessons have clear learning objectives, which teachers reinforce regularly. Generally, lessons have an appropriate pace and structure. Staff use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to develop pupils' thinking skills and problem solving skills. However, in a few lessons, there is too much input from teachers, the pace of learning is too slow and learning activities are not sufficiently engaging. As a result, a minority of pupils, particularly at key stage 4, do not meet their learning objectives and do not develop their understanding as well as they could.

Nearly all staff provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback. Across the service, teachers assess pupils' work carefully and provide useful feedback on how pupils can improve their work.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The caring, supportive ethos of the PRS provides a safe and calm environment, which makes a strong contribution to pupils' wellbeing. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They build positive relationships with nearly all pupils and work together effectively to develop pupils' skills, confidence and resilience. As a result, most pupils develop trust in adults and gain a better understanding of their own emotional needs and the importance of diversity and tolerance.

The PRS has developed a useful system to track pupil progress. Staff collect data from a comprehensive range of useful assessments that cover pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social and emotional abilities. Teachers in the primary phase use this information well to plan an engaging and relevant curriculum. However, generally across the service, teachers do not use this assessment information well enough when setting targets and planning provision in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and pastoral support plans (PSPs).

There is a consistent process across the PRS 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, the PRS does not analyse the patterns or causes of poor attendance thoroughly enough and these interventions are currently having little impact on the persistent absence of a few pupils.

The service provides valuable opportunities to help pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to keep themselves safe and to make choices that impact positively on their emotional and physical health. External agencies provide valuable specialist support for the delivery of an effective PSE curriculum.

The PRS has formed effective partnerships with important stakeholders that have a beneficial impact on pupil welfare. These include affective partnerships with local schools, colleges of further education, Careers Wales and work providers. The strong focus on pupils' destinations is a notable feature of the service. Staff support the transition process well through sharing useful information with partner schools when pupils return to mainstream education.

Staff have positive relationships with most parents and share helpful information with them on a regular basis. However, pupils and parents are not sufficiently involved in the target setting process and the writing of IEPs and PSPs.

The primary outreach service provides effective support for mainstream schools to meet the emotional and learning needs of pupils who are at risk of exclusion.

Regular meetings provide a useful platform for staff from across the PRS to discuss the behaviour and social and emotional development of individual pupils. However, the actions arising from these meetings are not as strong as they could be for all pupils due to the lack of detailed analysis of pupil progress in important areas such as attendance.

The provision for pupils to have positions of responsibility and to express their views is underdeveloped.

The PRS arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

The acting co-ordinator, the management committee and the local authority have established clear aims for the PRS. These aims are centred on equipping pupils with the qualifications and skills they need to make a successful return to a mainstream school or transition to another appropriate placement. Senior leaders share these successfully across the service and staff fully embrace them.

The arrangement of the PRS with sites in each major centre of population within the county supports the aims of the service well. For example, it helps staff at each site to build strong partnerships with local schools, which supports reintegration well. It also reduces the distance that pupils have to travel to receive support and enables pupils to maintain important links with their peers in mainstream schools.

Effective strategic leadership has led to improvements in aspects such as outcomes for pupils and ensuring that very few pupils are not in education, employment or training on leaving the service. Leaders are also effective in the way they adapt their provision in response to the frequently changing demands on the service. For example, they swiftly established a primary provision that meets the needs of pupils well. However, leaders have not acted strategically enough to improve attendance.

On the whole, the PRS's leaders understand their roles and responsibilities well and work effectively as a team. As a result of an ongoing restructure of the provision for vulnerable learners within the local authority, several members of staff have taken on acting leadership roles successfully. This has provided valuable professional learning opportunities and secured stability for the PRS at a time of considerable

change. There are generally appropriate arrangements for the performance management of staff, but the quality of objectives varies too much and arrangements to review progress against leadership responsibilities in particular are too loose.

Leaders have established valuable partnerships with local schools, colleges and businesses. These links make an important contribution to enabling most pupils to reintegrate into mainstream school or other suitable provisions.

The management committee includes representatives from a suitable range of stakeholders and is committed to the aims of the service. However, the committee does not have a sufficiently sound understanding of its role and responsibilities, particularly in terms of its contribution to the strategic direction of the service. Committee meetings address appropriately many aspects of the PRS's work, such as safeguarding, but do not give due attention to other important aspects such as the curriculum, progress against the development plan and self-evaluation processes.

Leaders have been effective in identifying specific aspects of the PRS's work in need of development and putting successful plans in place to secure improvement. For instance, they identified that pupils were not engaging with counselling services and made successful changes to the provision that resulted in a significant increase in use of the service. However, on the whole, the PRS's self-evaluation processes are not sufficiently robust and do not provide a firm enough basis to drive forward improvement, particularly in areas such as attendance. Leaders do not gather evidence from a suitably wide range of sources, including the views of pupils and parents and scrutiny of pupils' work. In addition, when evidence is gathered, leaders do not evaluate the findings effectively enough. For example, senior leaders do not use lesson observations and learning walks well enough to evaluate pupils' standards, progress and skills. As a result, leaders do not have a clear view of the effectiveness of all aspects of the PRS's work and actions for improvement are not precise enough.

The development of the professional learning of all staff is a strength. Teachers, support workers and teaching assistants benefit from a wide range of valuable professional learning opportunities. These include opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, various meetings to share good practice, courses and qualifications on specific aspects of teaching or wellbeing support, and the delivery of training to others, both within the service and beyond. This has resulted in good quality teaching and valuable emotional support provided to pupils by staff.

The acting co-ordinator works effectively with the local authority to manage resources. The PRS spends grant funding appropriately. In general, the PRS is well-resourced and staffed suitably. The accommodation and facilities in the primary PRS are of particularly high quality, though the accommodation at the Bryn y Cwm site is unsuitable for the number of pupils timetabled to attend.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the PRU and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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