



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**North Wales Adolescent Service (NWAS)
Llanfair Road
Abergele
Conwy
LL22 8DP**

Date of inspection: February 2013

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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Context

The North Wales Adolescent Unit (NWAS) is managed by Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board (BCUHB). It is a facility that serves the mental health needs of young people across the whole of North Wales. Each year young people who have severe and complex mental health issues are admitted to NWAS for a period of residential intensive therapeutic treatment.

During pupils' stay in the unit, they attend NWAS Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). This is an educational facility provided by Conwy Local Authority (LA) Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Department on behalf of all six of the unitary authority education departments across North Wales. North Powys is also included in the service level agreement. The PRU is situated in a purpose built building linked to the residential unit.

The staff within NWAS PRU work under the guidance of Conwy Education ALN Department and in partnership with the BCUHB staff team at NWAS. They aim to enable all patients at the mental health hospital to access their entitlement to education at an appropriate and effective level.

On average there are 20-30 admissions per year. Pupils are often functioning at levels considerably below their potential on admission to the hospital due to the severity and complexity of their mental health problems and/or life experiences.

The PRU works in partnership with the hospital by taking into account the therapeutic goals set for the students when planning educational targets.

Summary

The PRU's current performance	Excellent
The PRU's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The North Wales Adolescent Service is an excellent PRU because:

- pupils achieve excellent standards across the PRU;
- almost all pupils move back into their schools or onto further learning and maintain these places over time;
- staff meet the needs of pupils well;
- the support and guidance are highly effective; and
- there are excellent partnerships between schools and health professionals.

Prospects for improvement

Despite the excellent provision, the PRU has good prospects for improvement. This is because:

- managers have a clear vision for the PRU's work;
- there is a culture of self-evaluation with a good use of appropriate data; and
- the PRU manages its resources well and provides value for money.

However, the management committee, although very supportive, does not yet provide enough challenge related to school improvement. The PRU did not consult with as many stakeholders as it could have done in developing the self-evaluation report (SER). In planning, priorities are not always costed and it is not always clear how they are linked to standards.

Recommendations

- R1 Provide more challenge from the management committee to support school improvement
- R2 Make sure that there is strategic planning for skills across the curriculum
- R3 Work with health staff, education staff and the pupils to improve punctuality to lessons
- R4 Increase opportunities for pupils to develop independence across the curriculum, and in school council meetings

What happens next?

The PRU will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the PRU to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

Pupils who join the PRU are at very low points in their lives. They have acute mental health issues, are in a secure setting, and many have a very low opinion of themselves and their abilities. Many find it very difficult to trust adults and relate to others. Due to the very high level of support and encouragement that they receive from all the staff at the unit, including the education and health staff, pupils begin to recover, learn to trust others and engage in learning again. They make excellent progress over time. Their attendance improves and they become more willing to tackle new tasks. Parents and carers believe that the PRU's encouraging approach to their children's education enables them to begin to re-engage in learning and make plans for their future.

Last year, 21 out of 24 pupils either returned to full-time education or moved onto college courses. Most have remained in these settings successfully. Almost all pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the PRU. Last year pupils at the PRU attained 19 passes at GCSE, one AS level pass and one BTEC Level 3 Award in Art with distinction. Pupils also prepared for GCSEs and A level at the PRU and gained the confidence needed to sit the examinations at their schools. They gained 10 GCSEs and one A level. Given the extent of their difficulties on entry to the PRU, this is outstanding achievement.

Pupils learn to work with others very well. They improve their skills. They make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT), including tablets to research, draft and redraft and record their work. Their work on animation is excellent. They use thinking skills very well to solve problems and plan for and take part in events such as a coffee morning to raise money for charity.

They use their developing confidence and communication skills to speak up for themselves, take part in discussions and make presentations on topics such as tattoos. They read a wide range of texts relating to their GCSE coursework and produce high quality independent writing. They use appropriate subject vocabulary during lessons. In French they produce work of a very high standard and construct complex sentences, using a good range of vocabulary. Pupils' work in art is of a very high quality.

First language Welsh pupils practise and develop their Welsh very well. They achieve good GCSE examination results in Welsh and Welsh literature. Welsh second language pupils also gain GCSE passes in Welsh. All pupils gain a good understanding of Welsh culture.

Wellbeing: Excellent

All pupils feel safe in the PRU, due to the care and vigilance of the staff. Pupils feel that any bullying is dealt with well. This sense of security aids their recovery and allows them to learn. They recognise the very high levels of support and

encouragement that they receive from staff. Due to this support, they begin to trust staff and learn to share their feelings and concerns with them and their peers. They are able to discuss and raise matters that concern them and gain reassurance. These excellent gains in communication are an outstanding achievement and have a significant impact on their wellbeing.

Pupils enjoy their work in the PRU. They take part in a wide range of activities, which widen their horizons and increase their confidence. These include work with the John Muir Trust, Red Cross First Aid Award training and planning and organising an exhibition at a local art gallery. They learn to work very well in groups and give each other considerable support and encouragement. They learn to tolerate each other's differences very well and not to become distracted from their work.

Pupils have very good access to a valuable skills group, which is carefully designed to improve their emotional wellbeing. This skills group runs as part of the pupils' school timetable and is co-facilitated by teaching and psychology staff. The staff's non-judgemental, calm and supportive approach helps pupils learn how to recognise and deal with negative thoughts, recognise where they are judging themselves too harshly and be more accepting of themselves. This vital work on emotional wellbeing, the outstanding outcomes for pupils and the close working and trust between health and education professionals are sector leading.

Pupils benefit from an appropriate personal and social education course including sex and relationships education. This programme is very well supported by a school community police officer. As a result of this work, pupils gain a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and safety on the internet.

Generally pupils behave very well. Pupils' attendance levels improve over time. They attend regularly unless they are unwell. Last year the average attendance was 79%. For many pupils this increase in attendance is an outstanding achievement. However, pupils do not always arrive on time for lessons.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in decision-making and as a result they become more independent. They attend group meetings and discuss their feelings and identify solutions and plan the way forward for each other. They are fully involved in setting targets for their work and behaviour and review these targets regularly with the help of staff. They are frequently consulted about the work of the PRU. They attend the school council and discuss issues that impact on their school day. This has included changing the length of lessons and introducing accredited courses in textiles and media studies. However, pupils have not yet had the opportunity to take the lead in chairing or recording the meetings.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The PRU provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which identifies opportunities to build upon pupils' experiences within and beyond the school. Learning experiences are adapted well to meet the varying individual needs of the pupils and give them suitable individual learning pathways.

In lessons, the PRU ensures that pupils improve their communication, ICT, literacy and numeracy skills. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills. This focus on skills supports successful reintegration into school or college. However, the PRU does not plan strategically for the development of skills across the curriculum as well as it could.

The PRU provides a comprehensive personal and social education programme, which includes sex education. Where necessary, the health staff provide more individual work on particular issues and liaise carefully with the teaching staff.

The PRU prepares pupils well for when they leave, return to their community and attend school. For example, pupils can choose their options for GCSEs and prepare coursework, which helps them keep up with their peers and continue with their studies when they return to school.

The PRU makes very good provision for Welsh language speakers. Lessons are often bilingual. Pupils have good opportunities to hear and use incidental Welsh and learn about the history and culture of Wales.

The school provides a good range of opportunities within and beyond the classroom for pupils to develop their understanding of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. For example, they learn about child soldiers in other countries, contribute to energy saving initiatives within the PRU and grow vegetables in the PRU's garden.

Teaching: Good

Overall the quality of teaching is good and in a few cases it is excellent. All staff create a climate of mutual trust and respect.

Teachers carefully match work to pupils' individual needs and abilities and interests. They build on previous work and make good use of plenaries to remind pupils of what they have learned. They provide interesting work that relates to pupils' interests, such as a hoodies exhibition, extra French and yoga. They set clear objectives and make sure that pupils understand exactly what they will learn. They provide careful explanations and make good use of questioning to check understanding. They pay good attention to the development of pupils' skills as and when the need arises. Where teaching is excellent, teachers set very clear boundaries and are appropriately challenging. They model behaviour for the pupils and deal firmly but sympathetically with those who refuse to engage and distract others. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not encourage pupils to work independently.

Teachers are particularly adept at being flexible. As a result, they can accommodate pupils' low mood and therefore fluctuating levels of engagement, lapses in concentration and their particular needs relating to their treatment. Teachers often have to adapt quickly to changing situations when pupils do not arrive at lessons on time. They do this very well. However, too much time is lost in checking where pupils are and rearranging the lessons to accommodate latecomers.

Teachers carry out a thorough assessment of pupils' attitudes towards school and their literacy and numeracy skills on entry. They use these assessments well to inform how work is planned. There are clear and effective tracking systems to record and evaluate pupils' progress and plan further learning. Teachers work very closely with pupils' schools to make sure that pupils keep up with their work and that it is at the right level. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

Staff give pupils exemplary support and guidance. They pay very good attention to pupils' emotional needs and to raising their self-esteem. They have an excellent understanding of the particular issues that pupils have to deal with. The PRU has a wide range of comprehensive policies in place to promote pupils' health and wellbeing.

When pupils arrive at the PRU, they receive an attractive induction booklet designed to allay their fears about attending the PRU. The PRU successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and there are very good opportunities for personal reflection.

Pupils have very good access to professional support so that they can move forward, tackle painful personal issues and so benefit from their education. These include counselling, therapies and the use of a learning coach.

There is an appropriate behaviour policy, which outlines clear expectations for both pupils and staff. Staff make sure that all pupils have a good understanding of bullying and what to do if it occurs.

Teachers work very closely with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team and social worker to deliver a recognised behaviour therapy skills programme in the PRU. This is highly effective in promoting emotional wellbeing specifically targeting the needs of very fragile and anxious pupils.

Staff pay very good attention to increasing individual pupils' attendance. As a result, pupils increase their attendance rates over time.

The PRU identifies pupils' learning needs effectively. Staff work closely with pupils to discuss and set appropriate but challenging targets every fortnight. These are carefully monitored, shared with the CAMHS staff and regularly evaluated and updated.

The PRU's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Excellent

The staff at the PRU have created an inclusive and supportive ethos where all pupils are treated with great respect and dignity. This empowering climate complements the input from health and contributes well to pupils' recovery. All pupils have equal access to all aspects of the PRU's provision.

Staff promote diversity and equal opportunities very well. The environment is welcoming and well resourced to meet the learning and emotional needs of the pupils.

The school building is only three years old and was purpose built. The quality of accommodation is excellent. It is spacious, designed to meet pupils' safety needs and very well maintained. Displays throughout the PRU are attractive and stimulating for pupils.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision for the PRU and provides good leadership. The headteacher and deputy work well together and have developed a strong team. All staff are clear as to their roles and responsibilities.

There is a strong focus on continuous improvement, with high expectations. There are appropriate systems in place that support this aim.

The PRU successfully incorporates national priorities into its planning and delivery. This includes the Healthy Schools Award and equality of opportunity for 14-19 learning pathways.

There is a clear link between the performance management of staff and the priorities stated in the detailed school development plan. Targets for improvement are communicated well to staff and to members of the management committee.

The PRU management committee meets regularly and receives detailed reports, including data, from the headteacher. The management committee is supportive of the PRU. However, committee members do not provide enough challenge in relation to school improvement.

The headteacher plays a leading role in strategically planning for the future and in developing the provision to include outreach work within the authority.

Improving quality: Good

The leadership team and staff have a very good understanding of the PRU's strengths and areas for development.

Lesson observations by managers provide a useful indication of strengths and areas for development in relation to the planning and delivery of lessons. The outcomes of lesson observations are used to identify professional development opportunities. These are appropriate to the needs of individual staff members and are in line with the priorities of the PRU. Staff are engaged in a range of useful networks to support professional practice.

The PRU has recently improved the system for evaluating its work and recognises that this is an area for continued development. An appropriate range of data is used

to good effect in determining areas for improvements. Staff have been fully engaged in the process of self-evaluation and staff meetings are used regularly to reflect upon and improve practice. Self-evaluation clearly informs the PRU's priorities for development. However, the PRU did not consult with as wide a range of stakeholders as it could have done in developing the SER.

The PRU has identified a number of suitable targets for development, for example improving the learning experience, developing the curriculum and extending the range of accreditation on offer and enhancing links with the community. Although targets are clear, steps towards achieving these are not detailed enough.

The headteacher delegates tasks well and provides appropriate timescales for completion. However, managers do not always fully cost priorities or state the impact of actions on standards in the development plan.

Two of the six recommendations of the previous inspection have not been fully addressed.

Partnership working: Excellent

The PRU has established very effective partnerships with a range of local schools, further education colleges and other providers. These arrangements provide continuity in pupils learning and widen their opportunities. As a result of these partnerships, pupils benefit from curriculum support, specific subject teaching and good preparation for interview skills. Such links have been instrumental in securing the successful transition of pupils into school or further education colleges.

There is an appropriate service level agreement between the PRU and the local careers service. This ensures that pupils receive good quality impartial careers advice and guidance.

There is very good communication between the PRU and parents and carers. This gives them reassurance and it contributes to improving standards of pupil wellbeing.

The PRU works with a range of environmental agencies. As a result, pupils have built a recreational and working garden for the hospital community.

PRU staff work very closely with health colleagues. Teachers have been trained to deliver a therapeutic intervention for pupils at the PRU alongside health team members. In addition, teachers work alongside health professionals in supervision sessions with pupils. This approach to therapy has been shared at national conferences. The level of trust and partnership working between teachers and health professionals is outstanding. As a result of the excellent joint working between education and health professionals, there are well-developed plans to extend the service to provide community based education for young people on an outpatient basis.

Communication with health colleagues about the education needs and targets of pupils has been strengthened even further in recent months with the establishment of the education subgroup.

The PRU has recently benefited from external scrutiny from the health board and local authority. These reports have been positive.

Resource management: Good

The PRU employs a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The headteacher deploys staff effectively. This ensures that suitable curriculum opportunities are provided for all pupils. Staff numbers are based on recommended ratios for CAMHS settings.

Staff training is matched well to priorities for improvement. The PRU takes care in working with others to limit the costs of training. There is a good system in place for staff to share their knowledge and understanding of training undertaken. This has a positive impact on improving standards of pupils and the quality of teaching.

Spending decisions are made in line with school priorities and within the capitation available to the school. Where additional resources are required, careful consideration is given to these prior to requesting additional funding from the local authority.

The PRU has made good use of grants and donations to develop the learning experiences of pupils, for example the donation of music equipment by a local children's charity.

The partnership arrangement with the local health authority ensures that the PRU is maintained to a high standard. This contributes to providing a learning environment that positively influences outcomes of pupils.

The PRU provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Nine pupils out of fourteen pupils completed the questionnaire. All nine agree that they feel safe and that staff deal with bullying well in the PRU. They all have someone to talk to if they are worried and feel that teachers help them to make progress and deal with problems. Almost all pupils feel that staff treat them with respect, that pupils behave well and that they can get their work done. These pupils also agree that the PRU listens to them, that they have enough equipment and opportunities to take exercise, and that they are taught how to stay healthy. All pupils who responded agree that the PRU prepares them well for moving on, that they and their backgrounds are respected, and that they are encouraged to take responsibility and respect others.

Four out of nine pupils feel that they are not doing well at school. However, this response must be seen in the context of being depressed, in a secure setting and away from their schools. One of the aims of the behaviour therapy that they receive is to help pupils be kinder to themselves and not judge their performance too harshly.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Four parents completed the questionnaire.

They strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the school, their child is making progress, likes the school and was helped to settle in well. They agreed that the teaching is good, that their child makes progress and is safe in school, and that pupils behave well. All parents agreed that staff treat pupils with respect, expect them to take on more responsibility and encourage them to be healthy and take regular exercise, where appropriate. All thought that pupils receive good support and are encouraged to be more mature. They all felt comfortable with approaching the school. Most additional comments were very complimentary about the work of the staff and how well they support pupils.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Claire Yardley	Reporting Inspector
Huw Davies	Team Inspector
Peter Haworth	Lay Inspector
Christopher Alpin	Peer Inspector
Mark Peters	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment