



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

A report on

**Denbighshire PRU
Ysgol Plas Cefndy
Road
Denbighshire
Rhyl
LL18 2HG**

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by

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

About Denbighshire PRU's

Denbighshire portfolio PRU is an all age pupil referral unit (PRU) for pupils experiencing social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The PRU operates across three sites, with an integrated line management structure, and overseen by a single management committee.

The main site at Ysgol Plas Cefndy houses foundation phase to key stage 4 provision for pupils with SEBD. The Ruthin site houses the Stepping Stones provision for pupils in the primary phase. This provides short-term and part-time placements for pupils with SEBD. The Rhyl site houses the Milestones provision for a small group of key stage 3 and 4 pupils who present with high levels of anxiety. The PRU aims to return pupils to mainstream education or to further education, training or employment.

There are currently 78 pupils on roll. The local authority placement panel manages all admissions to the PRU. The majority of pupils are dual registered with their mainstream school. All pupils have access to full-time education.

Around eighty percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Fourteen per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and all pupils are on the SEN register. Pupils are predominantly from English speaking homes.

The PRU was last inspected in November 2014.

Summary

Denbighshire portfolio pupil referral unit (PRU) is a highly effective provision. Pupils with a wide range of needs and abilities make very good progress during their time at the PRU. Over time, a very high percentage of pupils return and maintain placements in mainstream education. This represents outstanding achievement from their starting points.

The PRU provides a warm and caring environment. Nearly all pupils are polite and demonstrate high levels of respect for one another, staff and visitors to the PRU. Curriculum activities are highly engaging and motivating and provide pupils with an exciting range of learning experiences. These activities meet the needs of pupils extremely well, develop resilience and support emotional, behavioural and academic progress highly effectively. As a result, pupil attendance is very high.

Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs and through rigorous analysis of all data, ensure pupils receive the support and intervention they need to succeed long term. The staff have excellent partnership working relationships with a wide variety of external agencies. These partnerships contribute significantly to the progress made by pupils.

The headteacher provides the PRU with exceptional leadership. The senior leadership team are highly effective in their roles which provides stability across the PRU. Staff are extremely motivated and strive to improve the outcomes for all pupils. Leaders have a very strong commitment to professional development opportunities for all staff at the PRU. This contributes strongly to the progress of the PRU and the overall effectiveness of the provision.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve provision for education through the medium of Welsh, for pupils from Welsh-medium mainstream schools.

What happens next

The PRU will draw up 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 the high number of pupils who return and maintain successfully their placement in mainstream education for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Nearly all pupils make very strong progress in lessons, achieving their identified targets and improving their learning. They respond very well to the staff's sensitive, nurturing approach and make excellent progress in achieving the targets in their individual learning and behaviour plans. In part, this is because pupils use very well planned and effective opportunities to remove themselves from classes when they feel over-whelmed and return when they are better prepared for learning. They know that there are spaces and staff available to help them through difficult times and most pupils become extremely skilled at recognising the feelings that cause them distress. Due to their improved understanding, for the most part, they avoid inappropriate outbursts of behaviour and return to lessons ready to learn.

Over time, and with skilled support, the conduct and self-discipline of nearly all pupils becomes highly developed. As they come to understand the reasons for their poor behaviour, learn to manage their anger and improve their self-esteem, they focus on learning academic skills. For most pupils, this was previously, too much of a challenge. However, over time, a very high percentage of the pupils from the PRU have returned to, and maintained their placements at mainstream schools. This highlights excellent progress in both their behaviour and academic achievement. This represents outstanding achievement from their starting points.

During their time at the PRU, pupils focus on improving their behaviour and controlling their emotions. However, in lessons, nearly all pupils also make consistently very good, and in a minority of cases, excellent progress in their academic learning. For example, they enjoy and gain success in mental mathematics games as they progress their numeracy skills. Older pupils calculate complex algebraic equations accurately as part of their GCSE work. These pupils transfer their skills confidently to science lessons where they give the word equation for photosynthesis accurately.

Many pupils develop their literacy skills extremely well. Over time at the PRU, most make impressive gains to their vocabulary to express their feelings and become very confident and effective communicators. For example, most pupils discuss how to improve their GCSE oracy presentation maturely to make it more interesting for the listener.

Older pupils write interesting extended pieces such as a book review of Michael Morpurgo's novel, *War Horse*. Most pupils read confidently. Staff provide well-supported daily sessions in key stage 2, ensuring that most pupils improve their reading and writing skills during their time at the PRU. Many older learners use their developing skills competently to keep informed of daily news and worldwide events.

Nearly all key stage 3 and 4 pupils make very effective use of information communication technology (ICT) to develop their knowledge and skills. They use the internet skilfully to find out more about the impact of the Chernobyl disaster on genetic mutations.

Across the PRU, most pupils develop their thinking skills very well. They develop sound skills of reflection and begin to consider their choices before taking actions. They present thoughtful questions, such as 'should we tidy up before we go out to play?' For many pupils this maturity of thinking before action is significant progress from their starting point. Many pupils from Welsh-medium schools make appropriate progress in their bilingual skills during their time at the PRU.

Through the PRU's very effective links with a local craft centre and with artists in residence, most pupils make excellent progress in developing their creative and social skills. Nearly all pupils take part in exciting activities to develop their creative skills. For instance, they learn to work as a team through measuring, rolling, stamping shapes to design and make a large pottery totem pole. This successfully strengthens pupils' academic and social skills.

Pupils at the PRU enjoy regular outdoor activities where they learn to cooperate and improve their physical skills. Most pupils walk or run the daily mile around the school to keep themselves fit. Older pupils enjoy using the school's kayaks to develop their skills further.

Older pupils at the school gain a wide range of skills and qualifications to support their future pathways. The attainment of pupils at the PRU has grown year-on-year since the last inspection. Over the last 3 years, all year 11 pupils left with at least one qualification. The range includes academic qualifications such as GCSE mathematics, English, Welsh, physics and biology, and vocational qualifications in practical subjects such as food technology, sport and travel and tourism. This is a significant strength of the PRU. The destinations of leavers shows a sustained upward trend, and includes college courses and university. Last year, all leavers went on to placements at the local college of further education or apprenticeships.

Pupils who attend the PRU have a wide range of needs, including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils have experienced significant periods of disruption to their formal learning prior to their arrival at the PRU. Many join the PRU at times of personal crisis, often towards the end of their compulsory education, and at different points during the academic year. As a result, there is considerable variation in pupils' individual starting points, motivation and learning ability. For this reason, it is not appropriate to compare standards that pupils achieve at the PRU with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils at the PRU make exceptionally strong progress in their wellbeing and attitudes to learning over time. Although most pupils have experienced considerable disruption in their education, they respond very well to the nurturing and caring ethos of the PRU and develop important skills in tolerance and resilience and respect. Most show respect to each other, staff and visitors to the PRU and establish excellent relationships with the staff team.

Many pupils, from low starting points, improve their attendance significantly at the PRU and most sustain this throughout their placement. A majority of older pupils walk, cycle or use scooters to travel to the PRU independently. These pupils attend very well and this is a significant improvement on their previous mainstream attendance.

Many pupils develop highly positive attitudes to their learning. They settle to structured activities quickly, sustain high levels of concentration and complete tasks successfully. Pupils take great pride in their work and persevere to complete complex pieces of work such as the movement of tectonic plates in science lessons when studying the shifting of the earth's land masses. They do this with a very high level of success.

Most pupils speak very positively about their school placement. During their time at school they develop a very positive outlook for their future. Nearly all pupils feel safe in the PRU and know what to do and who to speak to if they feel anxious or afraid.

Over time, most pupils make highly effective progress in developing strategies to manage their behaviour very successfully. They grow to understand their emotions, improve their self-esteem and make informed life choices. This is a particular strength of the PRU.

Nearly all pupils make very effective use of beneficial sessions to reflect on their own learning with staff. They offer valuable opinions about the PRU through one-to-one sessions, discussion groups and informal meeting times. Most pupils use good negotiation strategies to consider the designs and themes for individual break-out rooms and to devise and regularly review a pupil code of conduct.

Many pupils understand the impact of a healthy diet and lifestyle. They make healthy choices at breakfast and lunch times and make very good use of information displayed in the PRU on healthy eating and drinking. Most pupils take part in these communal meal times enthusiastically, serving each other and staff, as they develop important social skills extremely well.

Nearly all pupils engage in physical skills energetically by taking part in a daily mile at key stage 2, swimming, football and outdoor education at key stage 3. Most key stage 4 pupils appreciate the weekly gym sessions in the local leisure centre as part of their GCSE course.

Many pupils engage extremely well with a variety of beneficial community projects. They plan and maintain dedicated flower beds on the Rhyl promenade marked with the school name. In addition, they enjoy working with residents at a local care home to develop their digital competency skills and volunteering in a church café to serve the public. These highly effective links enable most pupils to develop a very strong sense of the value of their local community and their contribution to that community.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of extremely positive learning experiences that develop their interests and skills across a very worthwhile range of subject areas including English, mathematics, science and personal social education. This helps nearly all pupils to develop the knowledge and skills and self-esteem needed to support successful reintegration into mainstream education, work-based learning or further education.

The PRU provides a very strong and innovative curriculum allowing for nearly all pupils to become ambitious, confident and well informed individuals. The PRU's

curriculum is flexible and meets the needs of nearly all pupils very well. However, the provision for education through the medium of Welsh, for pupils from Welsh-medium schools, is limited.

Staff have very high expectations of their pupils. Nearly all teachers plan lessons and activities very well with highly engaging content to provide pupils with purposeful challenge. They use robust target setting clearly and successfully to inform lesson objectives that provide appropriate challenge for nearly all pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils know their targets and how to achieve them. The pace of lessons is very good with skilful use of visual prompts to maintain focus for pupils. Support staff provide exceptional input of a high standard across teaching, learning and pupil wellbeing.

Teachers plan a wide range of highly motivating activities including, circle time and quizzes. They use very effective warm up activities to settle pupils into their work promptly. Staff work with pupils individually in break out spaces, this is successful in supporting nearly all pupils to make very good progress with their, communication, social skills and behaviour.

Staff across the PRU have excellent working relationships with the pupils. They understand pupils' social and emotional needs extremely well and provide them with regular praise and encouragement. This ensures that most pupils remain engaged in activities and persevere with tasks. Staff manage pupils' challenging behaviour very skilfully and respond calmly and sensitively when pupils are finding things difficult. As a result, the behaviour of nearly all pupils in lessons is excellent.

Teachers are consistently skilful and purposeful when giving oral and written feedback. Staff use skilful questioning very well to check pupil's understanding and to develop pupils' thinking and problem solving skills across the PRU.

All teachers encourage pupils to use very effective self-assessment strategies consistently well at the end of lessons. For example, the key stage 2 tally system ensures that pupils reflect and promote ownership of their own behaviour very effectively.

All teachers plan very well for the effective development of pupil skills. Teacher planning across the curriculum for literacy and numeracy skills development is well established and planning focus strongly on clear progression and consolidation of key skills. As a result, pupils make excellent progress in these areas. The PRU's provision for social skill development is a particular strength, through the delivery of well-planned circle time activities throughout the PRU. Staff across the PRU focus strongly on the development of independent living skills to promote pupil's lifelong skills. Activities such as, community based activities involving pupils taking responsibility for their own classroom equipment to planning and making their own meals, are a very valuable. These activities benefit pupils greatly, especially those who return to mainstream education successfully.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

Staff at the PRU provide an excellent level of care, support and guidance for their pupils. They have developed highly effective policies, strategies and guidance that

they apply consistently to ensure they make a strong contribution to pupils' learning outcomes and wellbeing. The PRU's calm and purposeful atmosphere has a very positive impact on pupils. This contributes significantly to the pupils' extremely positive behaviour across the all sites of the school.

All staff come to know the pupils very well during the short time that pupils attend. This is a result of the outstanding partnership work with their mainstream school prior to placement and rigorous assessment once the pupils attend. Staff give acute attention to understanding pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs in order to help them progress back to mainstream school. Staff monitor pupils' additional learning needs very effectively to ensure their ongoing progress against the set targets by their mainstream school.

The PRU has extremely well established partnerships with mainstream schools which ensures it has comprehensive background information before pupils attend. Staff maintain regular contact with schools to keep them updated on pupils' progress. They work very closely with parents and other agencies, such as CAMHS, children's service and youth services to develop an accurate understanding of pupils' needs.

The PRU has a robust and effective tracking system which is implemented consistently by teachers across the various sites. This ensures that staff monitor academic progress, attendance and behaviour closely across all key stages. They use this information well to identify pupils who require support and to plan effective interventions. Senior managers conduct regular focused monitoring activities, such as book trawls and learning walks which have a very positive impact on the how teachers plan and adapt future work in lessons. This ensures individual pupils improve in specific aspects of their work. Senior leaders also analyse teachers' assessments and the outcomes of all tests carefully to measure pupils' progress and ensure they receive appropriate challenge and support.

Staff make excellent use of a range of appropriate intervention strategies to meet the needs of nearly all pupils. They monitor the effectiveness of all these interventions robustly to support pupils' progress and undertake comprehensive risk assessments and update them regularly.

The PRU maintains very flexible communication with most parents through diaries and regular phone calls. Staff provide useful parenting classes, including Living with Teenagers. The PRU undertakes highly effective joint work with the police, other agencies and organisations such as NSPCC, Barnardo's and Action for Children. This enables the PRU to provide a wide range of effective support for parents to understand and manage their children's' needs. These partnerships have a very worthwhile impact on the pupil's reintegration to mainstream education.

Staff at the PRU make good use of a highly effective programme of personal and social education to prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives. For most pupils, this is a return to mainstream education at school or college. The PRU gives a strong focus on pupils taking responsibility for themselves, coping with routines and behaving well. Staff use every opportunity to encourage pupils to care for themselves and others, and develop the confidence to take on a positive role in their community. A range of exciting creative and outdoor opportunities, including abseiling and rock climbing, provide pupils with worthwhile experiences to build their confidence and motivate their learning.

The PRU provides very useful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles, including the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse. A recent partnership initiative provides a Youth Shed, an innovative short-term, off-site provision where pupils develop deeper understanding of the implications of healthy living.

The staff's work with other agencies about pupils for whom they have concerns is a strong feature of the PRU. Staff have developed very robust procedures for identifying and recording concerns and they make very effective use of the policies and procedures to ensure pupils safety.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The leadership of the headteacher is motivational and highly effective. Her very strong strategic vision, placing the needs of the pupils at the centre of all the work across the PRU is outstanding. Staff both share this vision enthusiastically and support the leadership team successfully. The headteacher leads by example, which supports the development of the leadership team effectively promotes a robust and positive distributed leadership model.

The leadership team is proactive and very supports the headteacher effectively. The headteacher has very high expectations of all her staff and pupils, which has led to a strong culture of success for all pupils across the PRU. All staff provide positive role models for pupils. The emphasis on high expectations and respect for one another is a core value promoting a powerful sense of trust, safety and success across the PRU. The management committee is well developed and continually strives to improve its role for the PRU.

The distributed leadership model enhances the self-evaluation process effectively across the PRU. Senior leaders work very efficiently as a team to analyse outcomes of the self-evaluation process to plan for further sustained improvement. All staff contribute very well to the self-evaluation process leading to a clear understanding of the PRU priorities. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and how they contribute to the priorities. For example, they all have a solid understanding of the importance of raising the standards of pupil wellbeing. The PRU development plan clearly sets out measurable targets, which provide important indicators of improvement. For example, continuing to raise individual pupil attendance rates.

Leaders work exceptionally well with a range of partners. Partnership working has developed well over a number of years with for example, the PRU works closely with Action for Children, Children with Disabilities and Barnardo's to provide solid provision and support for all pupils. The PRU has also established and sustained very strong links with the mainstream schools across the local authority. The senior leadership team are also highly committed to develop positive relationships with parents further.

The headteacher is proactive across the region and has successfully led a regional conference for PRU colleagues. The impact of this has been to increase

professional development opportunities for staff at the PRU. The PRU makes valuable contributions to national initiatives, for example, the additional learning needs (ALN) reform agenda.

The passionate commitment from leaders to promote professional learning opportunities for all staff has significantly contributed to the progress and wellbeing of pupils who attend the PRU. Leaders recognise and fully support the culture of professional development for all staff. All professional learning links to performance management outcomes, individual developments and school priorities. This has strengthened the highly skilled support available to pupils across the PRU and the outreach service. Leaders ensure that staff at the PRU provide valuable advice, strategies, resources and training for mainstream school staff for pupils. The exceptionally high numbers of pupils who return to mainstream education and who maintain their placements successfully, illustrates the impact of this support.

Senior leaders manage the delegated budget very effectively. They have developed very robust financial arrangements, and expenditure links effectively to the PRU priorities.

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.

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