



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

**A report on**

**Canolfan Addysg Conwy**

**Penrhos Avenue Education Centre  
Ffordd Graig  
Penmaenrhos  
LL29 9HM**

**Date of inspection: February 2022**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Canolfan Addysg Conwy

Canolfan Addysg Conwy is a local authority pupil referral unit (PRU) for pupils aged 7 to 16 who are primarily experiencing difficulties relating to social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The PRU consists of three sites. Y Ddraig Goch is a key stage 2 provision located in Llandudno with 12 pupils. Penmaenrhos Education Centre is a key stage 3 provision with 29 pupils and Penrhos is a key stage 4 provision offering alternative education for 43 pupils. The Key Stage 3 and 4 provisions are located close together in Colwyn Bay.

Most of the current 84 pupils have dual registration at the PRU and a local school. Around half of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational need (SEN), most pupils are on the SEN register at school action plus. A very few pupils have looked after status (LAC). A very few pupils are identified as carers. A very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language. There are no pupils attending the PRU with ethnic minority backgrounds.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance trends of groups of pupils over time because of the nature of pupils' special educational needs.

The PRU is an amalgamation of services that previously existed across the local authority. The senior leadership team consists of the head teacher and three assistant head teachers each based at one of the three sites. The head teacher has been in post since June 2020.

This is the first core inspection for the amalgamated PRU.

## Overview

Pupils at Canolfan Addysg Conwy have a wide range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have experienced exclusion and breakdowns of previous education placements. Many pupils arrive at the PRU with a history of poor attendance and have frequently missed a considerable amount of education prior to starting at the PRU. As a result, they have little confidence in their own ability as learners and have considerable difficulties in managing their own behaviour.

When inspectors were on site, a majority of pupils were in attendance at the PRU. Our evaluations relate to those pupils present during the inspection.

The PRU provides a highly effective caring and inclusive ethos. Staff know their pupils well. They develop strong working relationships and provide safe and trusting learning environments. Staff work well with other services to provide strong support for pupils' social, emotional, and behavioural needs which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Staff and pupils in the PRU have experienced significant changes in the last three years. These changes include bringing three PRUs together as one, different leaders and the effects of the pandemic. Despite all these changes, the majority of pupils make suitable progress during their time at the PRU from their individual starting points. However, a minority of pupils do not attend regularly enough to make progress or get timely support from the local authority to improve their attendance.

Pupils access a broad range of opportunities for academic, vocational, and personal development. In many cases, teachers provide lessons which support pupils' needs, abilities and interests well. Staff use assessment information to plan support and develop appropriate individual education targets. In Key Stage 2, pupils respond well to helpful teacher feedback and are able to self-assess their own progress using emojis. However, older pupils have less opportunities to receive and respond to teacher feedback to understand how they can improve.

Nearly all pupils value taking part in a wide range of physical activities which help them to develop important social skills as well improving behaviour and learning in the community. Pupils take seriously their role on the school council and, as such, play an influential role in life at the PRU. They have contributed to changes in the behaviour and reward policy and developments in the PRU's buildings.

Leaders have quickly and accurately identified key areas for improvement and support staff well in managing change. These improvements are supporting the PRU to make progress effectively. For example, leaders have recognised the need to improve development of all pupils' Welsh language skills and the provision for pupils who speak Welsh as their first language.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve attendance including ensuring that the local authority provides appropriate and timely access to educational welfare services
- R2 Improve teachers' planning and their use of feedback to support the progression of pupils' skills
- R3 Develop opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles across the PRU
- R4 Improve the development of all pupils' Welsh language skills and the provision for pupils who speak Welsh as their first language

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Learning

The PRU has experienced significant changes in the last three years. These include the establishment of the amalgamated PRU in April 2019 and changes in leadership, as well as the effects of the pandemic. In spite of all these changes faced by pupils and staff, the majority of pupils make suitable progress during their time at the PRU from their individual starting points. However, attendance issues continue to impact negatively on the rate of progress of pupils across all key stages.

Across the PRU, many new pupils settle quickly into the nurturing environment and begin to make appropriate progress both academically and socially. Since the pandemic, many pupils have responded positively to re-establishing routines and structures at the PRU. Most of those pupils who have returned demonstrate resilience. However, nearly all pupils have needed additional support for their emotional well-being and mental health, which has impacted on their overall progress.

Over time, pupils develop their social skills appropriately. Around half of pupils work well in small groups and pairs. Many listen and respect the views of other pupils and staff and develop effective communication skills. A few pupils at Key Stage 4 are highly articulate and demonstrate extremely effective communication skills in relation to their age.

Many pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills appropriately and make suitable use of them in their learning. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils discuss how to scale down quantities of ingredients in recipes for Welsh cakes. At Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate suitable understanding of the conversion of decimals to percentages.

Many pupils practice their information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum where appropriate. However, across the key stages there are limited opportunities for pupils to consistently develop their ICT skills progressively over time. Overall, pupils across the PRU make limited progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well through a range of activities. These include pupils tie-dying socks and T-shirts, and recycling materials to make climbing holds. Many pupils benefit from opportunities to access music sessions and enjoy playing instruments such as guitars and drums to accompany popular songs.

Many pupils access a range of physical and outdoor activities. These activities help them understand the benefits of being fit and healthy, develop their self-confidence and improve their self-esteem. For example, they take part in mountain biking, e-biking and skiing. During break times, many pupils play games that develop their understanding of rules and how to manage winning and losing in an appropriate way.

Many pupils in Year 9 benefit from opportunities to access entry level qualifications in numeracy and literacy. This prepares pupils well and raises their aspirations in

choosing their qualification pathways at Key Stage 4. Nearly all pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve a suitable range of qualifications in GSCE subjects such as geography, history, art, English, mathematics and science, and vocational courses such as construction or childcare.

In the academic year 2020-2021, all pupils leaving in Key Stage 4 progressed into education, training or employment.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

The majority of pupils attend the PRU regularly. Many of these pupils improve their attendance effectively compared to their previous placements. For these pupils, this represents significant progress. However, a minority of pupils do not attend well enough.

During their time at the PRU, most pupils develop positive relationships with the staff, and this helps them feel safe and secure. They trust staff to help with their worries and know who to go to when they feel unhappy or concerned. These trusting relationships with staff contribute positively to the progress many pupils make, particularly in improving their well-being and raising their self-confidence and resilience. Pupils also benefit from the bond they form with the school dogs, Honey, Peppa, and Myla, who support their emotional development well.

Many pupils enjoy and value taking part in outdoor learning such as forest schools, paddleboarding, cycling and bush craft. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils regularly visit the local outdoor education centre where they develop their confidence, physical wellbeing and self-esteem through activities such as kayaking and gorge walking.

In lessons, many pupils settle appropriately to work, follow instructions suitably, and persevere with encouragement from learning support staff. They show respect for each other and staff and are happy to share and discuss their work with visitors. However, a few pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 3, do not co-operate consistently well with other pupils or with staff. They show little interest in their work and do not remain in class for the duration of the lesson. This behaviour has a significant impact on their own learning.

Many pupils develop suitably their understanding of the importance of helping other people through their participation in a variety of engaging activities. For example, they raise money for charity and for the PRU minibus whilst participating in upcycling projects and preparing items created on site for sale in a local shop. Key Stage 4 pupils develop their understanding of business and enterprise through selling their products online and at local markets.

Pupils take seriously their role on the school council and this is having a positive impact on pupils' life at the PRU. School council members have successfully influenced changes to the PRU's behaviour policies and reward systems. In addition, they have helped review the use of space across the site. This has provided additional quiet spaces for more vulnerable pupils and those who need space to regulate their behaviours, as well as social areas for pupils to interact with their peers. Older pupils, in particular, recognise the benefit of restorative practice when there is conflict between peers, and seek advice from staff to resolve this.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The PRU provides pupils with a broad range of relevant learning experiences including opportunities for academic, vocational, and personal development. There is a strong focus on well-being, which supports pupils well to make suitable progress in relation to their social, emotional, and behavioural needs.

Nearly all staff develop strong working relationships with the pupils and know their pupils well. They are aware of the wider contextual issues and the barriers to learning that individual pupils face. As a result, staff offer effective support, helping pupils to feel safe in school and able to engage suitably with learning within a nurturing environment. Support staff have positive impact and meet pupil needs in a sensitive and timely manner. This results in pupils having greater independence in their learning, feeling safe and being able to access help and support where needed.

The PRU has made effective progress in preparing for Curriculum for Wales. Staff in Key Stage 2 plan through the areas of learning and experience (AoLEs). Planning across the whole PRU is beginning to be underpinned by the four purposes. Staff in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 have adopted a carefully planned thematic approach to the delivery of the new curriculum. At Key Stage 4, pupils are beginning to understand how their learning will help them achieve the four purposes.

The PRU provides successful support for the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. There is a strong focus on social and emotional skills through the PRU's ethos, the planned curriculum including personal and social education and through targeted interventions. However, the teaching of Relationships and Sex Education is an area for further development. Similarly, the provision for the teaching of Welsh language and communication skills is underdeveloped.

In Key Stage 4, the PRU provides a good range of learning experiences to help pupils make informed choices around future careers and the world of work. These experiences are delivered through strong partnerships with the local college, the careers adviser and other external partners. The PRU arranges visits for pupils to the college of their choice and from local businesses to explain the work that they do to support pupils to gain skills for the workplace. This work is a strength of the PRU.

The PRU has a comprehensive suite of assessment packages to assess pupils on admission and to track pupil progress from this point. Generally, teachers are beginning to use the data that is provided from these assessments to review pupil progress and to inform their planning suitably. Effective tracking systems are in place, co-ordinated by the Assistant Head for each key stage. Teachers monitor academic progress, attendance, and social development appropriately across all key stages. The leadership team and additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) use this information well to identify pupils who require additional support and to plan interventions. The Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for assessment across the PRU conducts regular focused reviews with teaching staff to identify any issues, trends, or further needs. This ensures that nearly all pupils have appropriate targets to meet their individual needs.

Many staff have high expectations of their pupils. Most teaching areas are nurturing and appropriately stimulating learning environments. However, there is little pupil work on display to celebrate achievement.

Many teachers provide well-structured lessons that are matched suitably to pupil age, ability, and interests. Most teachers demonstrate a secure subject knowledge of the areas that they teach. Activities are generally well planned, but do not always consistently ensure continuity and progression in learning. Staff use pupil assessment information well to identify individual targets. However, many pupils do not know what the next steps in their learning are.

Many teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. For example, staff use quizzes to engage and challenge pupils and check their learning.

In Key Stage 2, pupils respond well to helpful teacher feedback and are able to self-assess their own progress using emojis. Teacher feedback for older pupils is less effective. There are very few planned opportunities for pupils to reflect and respond to teacher feedback and, as a result, the feedback does not consistently lead to pupils' understanding of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The PRU is successful in creating a caring and inclusive ethos. This supportive learning environment allows pupils to develop the skills they need to live fulfilling lives. This ethos permeates the work of the PRU and has a significant positive impact on pupils' well-being.

The PRU has faced considerable challenges in supporting the increased social, emotional, and behavioural needs of its pupils in the wake of the pandemic. Leaders and staff have used several useful strategies to support pupils' return to the PRU. This includes a range of beneficial well-being interventions as well as approaches such as displaying the work of pupils that have not yet returned to their classes. This approach fosters confidence and a sense of belonging.

Pupils' wellbeing and attendance are monitored appropriately across all key stages, and the PRU provides supportive interventions where required. However, different key stages use different monitoring systems and leaders do not have an overall understanding of attendance patterns across the PRU. The PRU does not have access to timely support from the education welfare service to help pupils who are not attending to reengage.

The PRU works effectively with a range of partners to enhance and strengthen its provision, particularly to support the social and emotional needs of learners. For example, there are strong partnerships with social services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The PRU has successfully delivered a new behaviour and reward policy. Strategies identified within the policy support pupils' positive behaviour well and pupils appreciate the Friday reward sessions.



Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs is effective. Teaching staff at the PRU have a comprehensive understanding and awareness of pupils' needs. Pupils' individual development support plans are appropriate and include relevant targets, which are reviewed regularly. This person-centered planning approach involves pupils, staff, parents and carers. These plans include useful strategies to promote pupils' learning and well-being. Most teachers use this information appropriately in their teaching and planning.

The PRU offers a range of useful intervention programmes that assist pupils in developing their basic literacy, numeracy, emotional health, and social skills. For example, pupils access anger management, yoga, and mindfulness sessions.

Well-being assessments are regularly carried out to ensure that appropriate and targeted interventions are in place to support pupils' social and emotional needs. Subsequent interventions may include therapeutic play and counselling, which are available to all pupils.

The PRU has suitable arrangements to support pupils' moral, social and cultural development. It makes beneficial use of partnership working with a range of agencies such as the police, health, and charitable organisations to enhance the curriculum.

The PRU plans effectively to develop pupils' awareness of careers and the world of work. It ensures a range of experiences that help pupils to make informed decisions about their future.

Through the work of the school council, pupils play an influential role in life at the PRU. Pupils have contributed to changes in the behaviour and reward policy as well as developments in the PRU's buildings such as the introduction of two sensory rooms.

The PRU provides a range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy. These include music lessons, graffiti artwork, hill walking, rock climbing and surfing locally. In addition, pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to take part in a local art project with Oriel Llandudno as well as competing in the Urdd's art competitions. These opportunities help pupils to develop confidence, self-esteem, and teamwork.

The safeguarding culture throughout the PRU is strong, and processes are robust and systematic. Leaders at the PRU successfully communicate and promote a culture of safety and provide clear direction to staff about their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding. It is considered an integral part of everyone's responsibility including the management committee, all staff, and pupils. Leaders have established an ethos where pupils feel secure and are listened to. Pupils are aware and confident that there are adults at the PRU who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty.

All members of staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to any safeguarding concerns. Designated safeguarding lead staff work effectively with other agencies such as social services to support pupils. The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The personal, social and health education curriculum develops pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This provision is delivered appropriately through a multi-agency approach, which equips pupils with the skills that they need to stay safe and to make informed decisions

## **Leadership and management**

Canolfan Addysg Conwy opened in March 2019, following the amalgamation of three separate services, which previously existed across the local authority: Y Gyffin, Penmaenrhos and Penrhos Avenue Alternative Education Centre. For over a year following its registration, the new portfolio PRU was run by a series of short-term interim headteachers while awaiting the appointment of a permanent headteacher.

Since the appointment of the permanent headteacher in June 2020 and new senior leaders in September 2020, the leadership team have worked tirelessly to lead the PRU through the considerable challenges presented by the pandemic and the amalgamation of the three sites.

In a short space of time, leaders have implemented significant changes to increase accountability and consistency of practice across the PRU. For example, they have reviewed previous policies and procedures to establish shared expectations, values and professional behaviours across the PRU. The headteacher has consulted carefully with staff and pupils to create a clear vision that is shared successfully with all stakeholders. This vision permeates the school's work and supports pupils effectively to make suitable progress in their learning and well-being.

The headteacher has introduced job descriptions and implemented consistent performance management processes for all groups of staff. This has helped staff across the three sites to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders have taken on overarching areas of responsibility across the PRU for important strategic aspects such as ALN, well-being and tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. In addition, as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic recede, staff have begun to travel more frequently between sites. Together, these actions are beginning to establish more consistent ways of working across the three sites.

Leaders across all three sites are highly visible. They act as positive role models for pupils, promote the school's vision vigorously, and provide a high degree of support for staff. Across all sites of the PRU, leaders and staff work together successfully to promote a culture of safeguarding to ensure that the PRU provides a safe and nurturing community that meets the diverse and complex needs of its pupils well.

The management committee fulfils its statutory responsibilities successfully. Members of the management committee offer a wide range of relevant skills and expertise drawn from their lead roles in social services and other agencies, and local schools, including a neighbouring PRU. These members have a strong understanding of the PRU's strengths and areas for development and provide valuable support and challenge to the senior leadership team.

The management committee and senior leadership team benefit in turn from close working relationships with the local authority's manager for social inclusion. She has

overseen the establishment of the PRU from its inception, and provides it with strong strategic direction based on a clear understanding of the PRU's position within the wider context of social inclusion locally and over time.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have introduced suitable arrangements to quality assure teaching and learning and to provide first-hand information to support the PRU's self-evaluation, for example through regular lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny. Although at an early stage of implementation, the evaluation of these activities links well to the school's improvement priorities. Teaching staff have worthwhile opportunities to contribute to self-evaluation and influence the school's strategic priorities.

Since their appointment, senior leaders have identified an ambitious range of priorities for improvement in many important and relevant aspects of the school's work. Where necessary, they have taken decisive action to address the most pressing areas of underperformance. However, overall, improvement planning processes are not co-ordinated coherently enough. In addition, the extent and range of priorities exceed the capacity of the leadership team to address these consistently. Leaders have begun to review opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles across the school. However, this work is at an early stage of development.

The PRU has developed an extensive programme of professional learning opportunities that links closely to the PRU's improvement priorities, and supports well the complex needs of pupils attending the PRU. This includes professional learning to support teaching and learning, as well as the ALN and social and emotional needs of pupils. However, leaders have not evaluated sufficiently the impact of these initiatives on teachers' practice. In addition, opportunities for teaching staff to observe and share practice in other settings and across the sites of the PRU are at an early stage of development.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

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

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

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

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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