



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

**A report on**  
**Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau Education Centre**

**Abergele Hospital  
Llanfair Road  
Abergele  
Conwy  
LL22 8DP**

**Date of inspection: May 2023**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau Education Centre

Name of provider	Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau Education Centre
Local authority	Conwy County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Pupil referral unit (PRU)
Residential provision?	No
Multi-site provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	5
Pupils of statutory school age	5
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2013
Start date of inspection	15/05/2023

Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau is an educational facility provided by Conwy Local Education Authority (LEA) Inclusion Service Department on behalf of all the unitary authority education departments across North Wales including North Powys. The staff within Nant y Bryniau work under the guidance of Conwy Education Inclusion Service and in partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) staff team at North Wales Adolescent Service (NWAS) to enable all patients at the mental health hospital to access their entitlement to education.

The pupil referral unit (PRU) provides education for pupils who have severe and complex mental health needs and are admitted for a period of residential intensive therapeutic treatment. All pupils who access this provision via health referrals and not education services. Every young person leaves the PRU when they are discharged from the ward. They leave with an identified pathway and are supported back into school, college, or employment. When a young person is deemed too unwell to access these, they are linked with appropriate services to meet their needs such as assisted living placements. All pupils remain on the register of their mainstream school or college throughout their in-patient or community patient time.

The PRU provides education for up to 18 pupils from age 12 to 18 years. The PRU is situated in a purpose-built building linked to the residential hospital unit. It provides two services. One for up to 12 pupils who receive on-site in-patient education (Kestrel provision). Secondly, an outreach education support service for pupils which can be on-site or in the community (Kite Provision).

A team of eight staff provide the educational support led by the teacher in charge. The educational support is fully integrated with health service provision. On average there are 30 to 50 admissions per year. These pupils' level of experienced

trauma is significant and as a result they may be detained under the Mental Health Act. The management committee includes one representative from each of the unitary local authorities, one staff representative, the teacher in charge, two NHS stakeholders, the local authority NWAS service manager and the Kite team clinical lead.

Due to the very few pupils currently receiving education at the PRU, Estyn have not reported on inspection areas 1: Learning and, inspection area 2: Well-being and attitudes to learning.

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Overview

Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau is an outstanding educational provision for pupils who have significant severe and complex mental health needs. Pupils' well-being is at its foundation and all staff work together to best meet the highly complex needs of the pupils who attend the provision.

Staff deliver a highly effective curriculum which supports the pupils to re-engage with learning during their time at the PRU. The highly skilled and dedicated staff provide flexibility in the delivery of the curriculum to ensure breadth and depth of learning experiences. These support the learning, health, and therapeutic needs of pupils in a meaningful way. Learning experiences are exceptionally well individualised and balance support for pupil well-being with academic study extremely effectively. This allows pupils to build their self-confidence and independence skills, and to develop increasing levels of resilience in learning and every day activities. The strong collaborative working across all staff, together with highly effective tracking and assessment processes, means that pupil progress is exceptionally well monitored.

Partnership working is a significant strength of the PRU. Staff develop highly effective links with pupils' mainstream schools and colleges to support them to continue with their educational pathways. A seamless and exceptionally strong working relationship between onsite health colleagues and educational staff is well established. This collaborative working places the pupils' needs at the centre of all learning and therapeutic support.

Staff provide a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment, where pupils are strongly encouraged to succeed in their learning. Staff have a deep understanding of the needs of all the pupils. This is well supported through a highly effective and purposeful professional learning offer for all staff.

Leadership at the PRU is extremely strong. The teacher in charge provides exceptional leadership and has developed a strong team approach with the staff. This means that all staff have a clear sense of working together to drive improvement. Leadership significantly supports highly effective partnership working for the benefit of the pupils, parents and carers.

## Recommendations

R1 Strengthen the role of the management committee

## What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the PRU to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to:

- The development of Welsh provision across the PRU
- The impact of the mental health functioning in education (MHFE) tracking tool

for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Teaching and learning experiences

In order to best meet the highly complex needs of the pupils who attend the provision pupil well-being is at the foundation of all the PRU's work. The education team work in exceptionally close partnership with colleagues in health to develop highly bespoke learning activities.

Staff have developed a carefully considered strategic approach to planning the curriculum. Learning activities align strongly with the shared vision for curriculum, teaching, and the needs of the pupils. As a result, the curriculum provides a beneficial breadth and depth of learning experiences that support the learning, health, and therapeutic needs of the pupils in a meaningful manner. The curriculum supports the development of confidence and resilience in the pupils and enables them to make progress.

Staff plan creatively for a range of learning experiences, which are very closely aligned to the clearly identified needs and interests of pupils. These build systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding, needs and skills. This effectively supports and challenges pupils to enable them to engage well in their learning when they are well enough to attend the PRU and make the best possible progress.

Staff at the PRU are making good progress in implementing the Curriculum for Wales. Planning is undertaken through the areas of learning and experience (AoLEs) and appropriate attention is given to the Four Purposes in the curriculum design. Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is sensitively planned in collaboration with health partners to support pupil understanding around healthy relationships, sexual health and keeping safe.

Staff plan a range of creative activities for older pupils, that focus well on employability and work-related skills. These help to raise pupils' understanding and aspirations around future careers and work and help them to make informed choices. Examples include visits from external speakers such as a doctor who has been working in Antarctica and sharing staff employment journeys. Well-being activities are well planned to develop communication, team building and thinking skills through a range of challenges, for example building a 3D circle out of crisps, and the spaghetti challenge.

The PRU makes strong provision for the development of Welsh language skills in both formal teaching activities and in informal situations. Where appropriate, lessons are conducted wholly through the medium of Welsh. Staff are excellent role models for all pupils in sharing their own passion for learning the language. They are well

supported to develop their use of the Welsh language, and this has led to all staff either being fluent in Welsh, or confident learners who are able to use Welsh appropriately during teaching and informal discussion times. The use of the Welsh language is a strength of the PRU.

Education staff use all available information of individual pupils' learning and well-being needs robustly in the planning of the curriculum and in the delivery of individual lessons. This leads to highly bespoke, sensitive, and integrated individualised pupil plans, which positively address pupils' learning, medical and therapeutic needs.

Teachers demonstrate very sound subject knowledge of the areas of learning for which they are responsible. In addition, they are highly adaptable and able to revise planning within their designated subject area or to deliver new areas of learning to a high level when needed. As a result, planning links very well with the curriculum in the pupils' mainstream provision. This effectively supports successful transitions and a shared understanding of pupil progression.

Staff carefully consider the content of lessons in order to provide a balance of study and practical activities. This positively impacts on pupils' levels of engagement and resilience. All staff provide highly effective and sensitive support to nurture pupils' individual learning and care needs throughout the day. Support staff are very well qualified and experienced and are deployed effectively to provide skilful support. The relationship between staff and pupils is highly effective and pupils feel safe, secure, understood and cared for. This results in pupils developing very positive attitudes to learning and engagement during their time at the PRU.

Staff use questioning techniques effectively and sensitively to check pupil understanding, inspire deeper intellectual thought and think critically about the subject being taught. Challenge and expectations are high. Throughout lessons, staff provide useful, on-going oral feedback to pupils in regard to the progress that they are making. Pupils' response to written feedback is inconsistent.

Staff make creative use of the limited on-site outdoor space. They use this effectively to support well-being and the development of pupils' understanding of specific skills. For example, pupils learn about sustainability, grow their own food, and sell it to staff. Pupils have also benefited from a presentation from a professor specialising in bees and their importance in nature. Staff use local outdoor areas to extend effectively the curriculum offer, for example well-being woodland walks and visits to the local beach.

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

Canolfan Addysg Nant-y-Bryniau provides a very warm, welcoming, and safe environment that strongly celebrates pupils' individuality and develops their self-esteem. The caring ethos of the whole staff team and use of person-centred approaches contributes highly effectively to pupils' well-being, engagement and personal development. Nearly all pupils respond positively to this nurturing environment and as a result develop improved levels of well-being and confidence in their learning and in their daily lives.

Staff know and understand their pupils' additional learning needs very well. The PRU liaises effectively with mainstream provision to gather information about pupils'

learning pathways and prior attainment on admission. In addition, when it is appropriate for the pupil, staff carry out a suitable baseline assessment of pupil attainment, with a specific focus on mental health and well-being. Staff use this information highly effectively to develop suitable bespoke learning pathways that meet the individual needs of the pupils, in line with their significant health needs.

The PRU works extremely well in partnership with others, for example health services, careers, and social services. Partnership working with the health team is exceptionally strong and the work of the education team is highly valued by them. These strong links positively support the progress pupils make and enable the whole team to have a shared purpose and confidence in each other. For example, members of the education team work alongside health colleagues in elements of a therapeutic approach. These sessions support pupils well in developing strategies to cope with stress and anxiety, regulate their own emotions, and improve their relationships with others.

Education staff establish valuable relationships with parents and carers and develop effective lines of communication using methods that are most appropriate to the families. They work purposefully alongside the family liaison officer in health. This enables the education staff to understand the parents' and carers' point of view on education and further support the pupils and their families.

The PRU effectively monitors pupils' progress using a bespoke tracking and monitoring tool. This system is used exceptionally well to plan regularly for progression in skills, ensuring that all pupils achieve the best they can. The consideration of pupils' mental health, confidence and social skills is integral to the process. The team discussions around progress allow staff to recognise and reflect when there may be issues arising for the pupils and ensure that the most appropriate strategies are used to support them. For example, during difficult periods when a pupil's mental health deteriorates temporarily, the ability of the team to focus on the small steps in progress and tailor education to individual needs is a strong feature of the PRU.

The PRU produces useful plans such as one-page profiles and individual programmes, which help staff to support the pupils in their learning as well as managing their anxiety and behaviour. Plans are shared effectively across the whole staff team and include colleagues from health, which ensures consistency across the provision. These individual programmes are in an early stage of development.

Staff implement the PRU's behaviour policy consistently and they record incidents appropriately, in conjunction with health colleagues. Processes to monitor such incidents and identify particular patterns and trends are robust and are used regularly as part of daily team meetings and to inform planning. The PRU is clearly able to demonstrate the progress pupils make when planning opportunities for them to return to their mainstream provision.

Pupils benefit from the sensitive support and advice of staff in relation to future career pathways and next steps. The PRU encourages a range of visitors to speak to the pupils about their roles. In addition, staff work effectively alongside Careers Wales to provide impartial careers advice and guidance. There are also opportunities for pupils, where appropriate, to attend local careers events. The majority of pupils

are able to leave Nant y Bryniau and transition successfully to another education placement, for example return to their mainstream school or further education college including university.

The PRU provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of sustainability and the environment, for example developing the garden area by creating bug hotels and making beeswax food wraps. In addition, the PRU works closely with the local community, for example by celebrating their work as a fairtrade town. Pupils are supported to carry out fundraising activities such as a fairtrade tombola and selling cakes and handmade crafts to raise funds and awareness of mental health charities.

The PRU offers valuable opportunities for all pupils to have a say in their learning both on an individual level in deciding their curriculum and as part of the inclusive student council. For example, members of the student council requested music lessons. These are now in place with a peripatetic music teacher attending weekly to deliver drum, guitar, and keyboard lessons.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding in the PRU, which appropriately reflects the vulnerability of the pupils. Staff at all levels follow clear procedures to ensure that pupils receive effective support and protection, and they are aware of their role in keeping pupils safe. Staff understand the arrangements for safeguarding and respond to safeguarding concerns promptly.

All staff undertake regular beneficial training to keep pupils and themselves safe. In addition to mandatory training, this includes training alongside health colleagues to enable them to have a deeper understanding of the complex mental health issues that impact on the safety and well-being of the pupils. The PRU's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Leadership and management**

The teacher in charge provides exceptionally strong, assured leadership. Leaders together with all staff have developed a clear vision to educate and inspire pupils and provide them with the best possible preparation for their future lives.

There is a focused, exceptionally well-managed team approach and spirit to all that happens at the PRU. The extremely strong working relationship between staff and pupils promotes a supportive, inclusive, and caring ethos that permeates throughout the PRU. This significantly impacts pupil progress and development.

Staff roles and responsibilities are distributed highly effectively to make best use of individuals skills across the PRU and is a strength. Teachers and support staff take responsibility for different aspects of the work of the PRU, for example areas of learning and experience, trauma informed approaches, therapeutic work with health colleagues, and Welsh. This means that all staff have a clear sense of working together to drive improvement.

Leaders prioritise pupil well-being, which underpins the work of all staff. This is well balanced, with opportunities for engaging pupils in learning where staff have high expectations. Leaders focus sharply on skills and next steps for pupils. Together, all

staff provide exemplar role models for pupils, which effectively supports them to positively re-engage with learning.

There is a strong, highly skilled and committed group of staff at the PRU working together for the benefit of their pupils. This is further strengthened through the seamless offer of provision and highly effective collaborative working between health and educational staff. This supports pupil progress, mental health needs and well-being and contributes to the exceptionally high levels of pupil care. The collaborative approach between health and education staff actively supports pupils to progress successfully, for example to return to mainstream education, further education, employment, or training. Where this is not possible, due to a young person's health needs, leaders work effectively with other services, to plan suitable pathways when they leave the PRU.

The teacher in charge has established a robust system of quality assurance processes. These include learning walks, book scrutiny and weekly forensic monitoring of the mental health functioning in education (MHFE) tracking tool for each pupil with all staff. As a result, leaders have a precise understanding of the PRU's strengths and areas for improvement.

Performance management for teachers and support staff is robust. Objectives link well to the PRU development plan. Self-evaluation and development planning are a strength of the PRU. In addition, leaders promote a strong culture of reflection and collaboration, which supports staff to evaluate their practice and identify how they can make improvements.

Leaders provide high levels of accountability and support through purposefully planned and highly effective programmes of professional development. These contribute successfully to improvements in the effectiveness of teaching, supporting pupil mental health needs and well-being. For example, therapeutic approaches strongly influence interactions to support pupils to build resilience and become independent learners.

The teacher in charge places a particularly strong emphasis on continually improving staff skills. Leaders have a precise understanding of staff strengths and provide them with regular opportunities to develop in other areas. For example, leaders support staff to develop their Welsh skills and spend time in mainstream school to improve their Welsh and knowledge of the delivery of Welsh GCSE qualifications. All staff receive regular training that is well matched to the school development plan. This positively impacts improvements in teaching, pupil and staff well-being and the mental health needs of the pupils.

Leaders have created a robust safeguarding culture at the PRU. Staff have in-depth knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures. This culture is well established and supported by valuable training opportunities. Staff's thorough knowledge of the extremely vulnerable nature of their pupils means that they securely provide safe learning environments and opportunities for all pupils throughout the day.

Leaders have a well-established and strong working relationship with their regional school improvement service. Staff benefit from the professional development

dialogue and opportunities provided, which effectively support progress in addressing the PRU improvement priorities.

Following a period of change in the membership of the management committee, clarity over roles and responsibilities for committee members is beginning to be developed. The impact of the challenge and support provided by committee members for the teacher in charge of the PRU is underdeveloped and is an area for improvement.

## 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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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