

A report on
Carmarthenshire Teaching & Learning Centre

**Llansteffan Road
Johnstown
Carmarthenshire
SA31 3NQ**

Date of inspection: February 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Carmarthenshire Teaching & Learning Centre

Name of provider	Carmarthenshire Teaching Learning Centre
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Multi-site provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	42
Pupils of statutory school age	42
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	02/02/2026

Further information

Carmarthenshire Teaching and Learning Centre, a pupil referral unit (PRU), is part of Carmarthenshire local education authority's provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The PRU provides specialist support for pupils who are referred to and meet criteria at the local authority's behaviour panel. All pupils receive targeted education packages that aim to meet their primary need identified in their individual development plan (IDP) and where appropriate, in relationship with their mainstream school on a dual placement basis.

All pupils have additional learning needs and have a local authority maintained IDP.

Many of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and just over a quarter are looked after children. No pupils are learning English as an additional language.

One management board oversees the PRU.

The Centre Manager has been in post since April 2023, and this is the PRU's first inspection.

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

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

Summary

Leaders and staff at Carmarthenshire Teaching and Learning Centre are committed to the well-being and development of their pupils. The Centre Manager's clear purpose to "create a climate of possibility for all" shapes this commitment. This shared approach creates a caring, supportive environment where pupils generally feel safe, respected, and encouraged, helping many to engage more fully with their learning over time. Staff are skilled at spotting early signs of dysregulation and using strategies to calm situations, which helps maintain a positive atmosphere and improves behaviour. Exclusion rates have fallen noticeably, showing the positive effects of therapeutic support and pastoral care. However, a small group of pupils still experience frequent exclusions, showing that challenges remain in supporting those with the most complex needs.

The PRU's environment is stimulating and supportive, with creative and calming spaces that help pupils regulate their emotions and develop autonomy. Effective partnership working with education, health, and social services ensures that pupils receive coordinated, personalised support. Financial leadership is secure and enables equitable access to enrichment activities and holiday provision, supporting pupils' well-being and confidence throughout the year. Safeguarding arrangements are strong, with clear procedures, consistent staff practice, and robust multi-agency collaboration that help pupils develop important skills to keep themselves safe.

Despite these strengths, attendance remains a significant concern. Leaders understand the complex barriers pupils face, including vulnerability, additional learning needs, and family circumstances, and work closely with families and external agencies to encourage engagement. While some pupils make significant improvement from their starting points, for too many attendance remains low, which limits the progress they can make.

Teaching and learning across the PRU is strengthened by trusting relationships and a flexible, responsive approach to pupils' needs. Where practice is most effective, lessons are engaging, practical, and designed to build skills, literacy, numeracy, and creativity. In a few lessons, teaching is overly teacher led or expectations are too low, reducing opportunities for pupils to make decisions, extend their thinking, or develop independence.

Pupils generally make suitable progress and achieve a range of accreditation that aligns with their abilities and interests. Staff prepare pupils well for progression into post-16 education, training, or employment, which is a strength of the provision.

However, the strategic planning for skill development across the PRU remains underdeveloped, limiting the coherence and consistency of learning experiences. Further, the provision for first language Welsh is inequitable.

Formal structures for pupil voice are limited, which constrains pupils' ability to influence decision-making and develop confidence in shaping their learning.

ALN provision is appropriate and improving, with individual development plans guiding targeted interventions in areas such as self-regulation, literacy, and numeracy. Staff make good use of this information to support learning, but the tracking and evaluation of interventions are underdeveloped, limiting leaders' ability to measure their impact and ensure consistent progress. While digital systems for monitoring progress are developing collaboratively, they are not yet fully embedded, reducing the precision of overall evaluation.

Leadership at the PRU has brought stability and a clearer sense of direction, which has boosted staff morale and strengthened a shared commitment to inclusion. Clear responsibilities and professional development, especially in trauma-informed practice, have helped staff support pupils' emotional and behavioural needs more consistently. Yet leadership of skill development is underdeveloped, and opportunities for distributed leadership are limited. Self-evaluation processes, though drawing on a suitable range of evidence, remain descriptive, limiting leaders' ability to demonstrate clearly the impact of improvement actions on teaching quality and pupil progress. Management committee members provide developing oversight, but engagement in evaluation and school improvement is at an early stage.

Recommendations

We have made four recommendations to help the PRU continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen the planning and co-ordination of skills across the curriculum
- R2 Improve attendance including reducing the number of pastoral support plans (PSPs)
- R3 Develop shared leadership to increase the PRU's collective capacity to lead and deliver agreed priorities.
- R4 Fully embed systematic self-evaluation processes so that leaders and staff consistently evaluate impact and use findings to drive improvement.

What happens next

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

Main findings

Staff at Carmarthenshire Teaching and Learning Centre show care, understanding, and interest in pupils' well-being and development. The Centre Manager articulates a clear moral purpose 'to create a climate of possibility for all'. Staff across the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) share this aspirational vision that emphasises trauma-informed practice and pupil well-being. Consequently, pupils feel safe, respected and supported, enabling improved engagement for many pupils over their time at the PRU.

Supporting pupils' well-being, behaviour and attendance

Across the PRU, pupil behaviour is generally settled, and pupils engage positively in lessons. Staff are highly skilled in recognising early signs of unrest and implement swift de-escalation strategies to minimise disruption to learning. Consequently, nearly all pupils feel valued and enjoy attending the PRU.

Provision for trauma-informed practice is effective, and most pupils show improving attitudes to learning. These improvements demonstrate the PRU's increasing success in supporting pupils to re-engage with learning and build confidence. Behaviour across the PRU is steadily improving, and monitoring processes for tracking behaviour and the use of physical interventions show reductions in both intensity and complexity. As a result, many pupils present as calm and focused during lessons. However, staff do not consistently address pupils' use of inappropriate language.

The climate at the PRU is positive and calming, helping pupils settle and feel relaxed throughout the day. The physical environment is both stimulating and supportive, featuring a music room, creative spaces, and game zones. Pupils have access to multiple calming areas and use them purposefully, promoting autonomy over their emotional and mental well-being.

Leaders and staff understand well the complex barriers that contribute to poor attendance for many pupils, including vulnerability, additional learning needs and family circumstances. They work diligently to maintain regular contact with families and, where appropriate, involve external agencies. Many pupils make substantial improvement in their attendance from their initial starting points. However, despite these efforts, attendance remains too low for too many pupils. Attendance at the centre is a significant concern.

Overall pastoral support plans (PSPs) are suitable with a well-established system in place for three weekly reviews. However, currently around half of pupils have a PSP in place.

Overall, exclusion levels have improved significantly, reducing from 43 exclusions in autumn term 2024 to 20 in autumn term 2025, indicating that therapeutic interventions and support are having a positive impact. However, exclusions remain concentrated among a few pupils, highlighting ongoing challenges in meeting the needs of pupils with complex behavioural needs. The current reporting and tracking system hampers leaders' evaluation as the provision does not routinely record or analyse the number of days lost to exclusion.

Partnership work is beneficial, with extensive and effective links across education, health and social services that enable leaders to meet pupils' holistic needs. As a result, pupils receive timely, coordinated and personalised support, contributing to improved well-being and engagement.

Spotlight 1 - Support for pupils throughout the school year

The PRU provides beneficial support for pupils who are economically disadvantaged. This is rooted in a strong commitment to equity and inclusion. Financial barriers are removed so that all pupils can fully access trips, visits, and enrichment activities. Further, leaders allocate finances beneficially for PRU staff to deliver comprehensive holiday provision. This ensures valuable continuity of support for pupils during school breaks, when pupils are most at risk of disengagement. This consistent, year-round approach has a positive impact on pupils' well-being, confidence, and resilience, helping them feel valued and supported. Enrichment experiences broaden pupils' horizons and contribute to improved emotional and social development.

Safeguarding arrangements

Safeguarding arrangements at the PRU are strong. Leaders promote a culture where pupils learn how to stay safe through lessons and activities, and staff consistently follow safeguarding procedures. Vulnerable pupils receive high-quality support, backed by effective multi-agency work and daily routines that make it easy for them to raise concerns. The management committee monitors safeguarding through reports, meetings, and audits, while staff receive thorough training, including regular updates. Overall, the curriculum effectively helps pupils understand risks, consent, and online safety.

Teaching and learning and skills development

Staff across the PRU develop trusting and nurturing relationships with the pupils. Overall, they have a flexible approach and adapt learning experiences suitably in response to the needs, behaviour and well-being of pupils. Strategies to manage behaviour are consistent with pupils having clear expectations and boundaries in place.

Where teaching is most effective, staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs and interests and use this knowledge well to plan learning that builds effectively on prior learning. Many teaching staff provide stimulating, practical and highly creative learning experiences such as smelting metal to make Roman coins and preparing foods with ingredients only available during Roman times. These learning activities engage pupils' interest and ensure they make suitable progress. In these effective lessons teaching staff use clear and explicit instructions and effective questions which support and develop pupils' understanding well. However, in a few cases learning activities are overly teacher led. In these lessons, teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunity to sustain their thinking or make decisions about how they plan and carry out their work. Further, in a few lessons expectations are too low.

Across the PRU assessment is designed and delivered to engage pupils in their learning. Verbal feedback is immediate, positive and supportive of pupils' efforts. This motivates pupils to persevere with their learning tasks and make effective progress over time. In the most effective practice teachers' written feedback includes questions and comments which challenge pupils to clarify their thinking or to extend their learning.

Teaching staff have a beneficial focus on developing pupils' skills in important areas of learning which relate suitably to the individual needs of the pupils. Overall, where pupils attend regularly, they generally make suitable progress in developing important skills. They enjoy learning, participate well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However the strategic planning for skill development across the PRU is underdeveloped. Further the overall provision for first language Welsh is not equitable. As a result, pupils cannot access the curriculum through their chosen language.

Many pupils have suitable opportunities to apply their literacy skills across the curriculum. Most pupils engage well with visitors and talk confidently about their learning experiences and about their future plans and aspirations. Many pupils read aloud fluently and tackle unfamiliar words confidently. Many pupils extract information from texts successfully and a few pupils deduce and infer meaning from texts. For example pupils write about how writers make us feel sorry for people who are sleeping on the streets. Overall many pupils write suitably in a range of different contexts. For example, pupils write short sentences about the causes and effects of global warming, and a few pupils produce extended pieces of writing about whether animal testing should be banned for medical research.

Many pupils make worthwhile progress in developing their numeracy skills. For example they identify the properties of shapes, work out the perimeter and area of shapes and complete basic calculations. Many pupils use numeracy skills within real life contexts such as measuring quantities for cookery and measuring lengths to build wooden Christmas trees.

Many pupils skilfully develop their creative and physical skills through a wide range of purposeful and enriching learning activities. For example when using the newly refurbished gym or creating wooden stools and producing attractive art pieces. This is a strength of the PRU.

Staff prepare pupils effectively for progression to the next stage of life and learning. Through carefully considered support and guidance, most pupils move on successfully to post-16 provision at the local further education college, or into training or employment. This represents a clear strength of the PRU.

Leaders have established a beneficial assessment and tracking system. This enables teachers to assess and track individual pupil progress from their entry baselines in their well-being and areas of learning and skills suitably.

Nearly all pupils achieve a range of accreditation in areas that reflect their abilities and interests well. This includes for example the King's Trust, Entry levels, BTECs, Level 1 and 2 awards and GCSE.

Pupil voice

Staff consider pupil voice when planning resources and developing the environment, for example, developing the sensory and hair and beauty areas with appropriately costed resources adding a layer of real-world learning. However, there is a lack of formal pupil voice structures. This limits pupils' opportunities to influence decision-making and to contribute meaningfully to decisions about their learning over time.. This represents a missed opportunity to build confidence and empower pupils in decisions that affect them.

Curriculum provision

The curriculum is becoming increasingly coherent, relevant, and inclusive, supported by flexible approaches and a broadening range of experiences. There is a strong commitment to enhancing pupil engagement and well-being. Staff demonstrate dedication by introducing pupils to new and enriching opportunities, including overnight stays and adventurous outdoor activities such as white-water canoeing and skiing.

Equity in the curriculum offer for all pupils, including those on part-time arrangements, is a strength of the PRU. Beneficial areas of learning and experience (AOLE) action plans have been developed to monitor next steps across all subject areas; however, it is still too early to evaluate the full impact of these plans.

ALN provision

Overall, ALN provision within the PRU is appropriate and developing well. All pupils at the PRU have additional learning needs and are supported through individual development

plans (IDPs) maintained by the local authority. The ALNCO plays a pivotal role in sharing information from these plans with all staff, enabling the development of targeted interventions that support progress in key areas such as self-regulation, literacy, and numeracy. This information also informs intervention profiles, which are shared with parents and carers, helping to involve families in their child's learning journey. While interventions are well-designed, the tracking and evaluation of their impact is underdeveloped.

Support for new pupils is robust, with local authority officers providing clear and accurate information that enables staff to prepare individualised transition plans. These plans ensure purposeful starting experiences, shaped by pupil voice as well as parent and carer input, which help pupils settle quickly and engage with learning.

Procedures to monitor and track pupil progress are developing effectively, supporting pupils to achieve their small-step targets. Digital records are maintained collaboratively by all staff, promoting shared accountability and ensuring that the complex needs of pupils are addressed consistently across the PRU.

The ALNCO has a sound understanding of strategies to support the full range of pupils' complex needs and works effectively with a variety of external agencies, including the educational psychology service and children's services. Together, they develop resources and strategies that all staff can implement, ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach to meeting pupils' individual needs.

Leading and improving

Since the appointment of the current Centre Manager, leadership has brought greater stability and coherence. There is a strong, shared understanding of the PRU's inclusive ethos, where everyone feels valued.

Leaders have established clear accountability structures, including, for example, weekly staff and senior management team meetings and regular teaching and learning clinics. This is beginning to strengthen the quality of strategic direction at the PRU and is leading to improvements in a few areas. For example, in the consistent approaches to supporting pupils' well-being and behaviour. However, overall, shared leadership is underdeveloped.

There are regular and beneficial opportunities for staff collaboration and professional dialogue, including planning and professional learning meetings. Professional learning is highly valued by staff and is leading to improved consistency in a few areas, such as trauma-informed practice. This is strengthening staff confidence in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural needs and incidents of dysregulation have reduced.

Self-evaluation processes draw on a developing range of suitable evidence, supporting leaders to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders gather evidence from data evaluation, learning walks, book looks and professional dialogue. Improvement priorities align well with the findings of self-evaluation and accurately identify the need to improve pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy, increase attendance and develop leadership capacity. Local authority officers provide effective support and challenge, offering structured guidance for monitoring and contributing to learning reviews that model an evaluative approach. While leaders at the PRU are beginning to apply this approach, it is not yet fully embedded. As a result, self-evaluation remains too descriptive and lacks precision, which limits leaders' ability to demonstrate clearly the impact of improvement actions on teaching quality and pupils' progress over time.

Performance development and review processes provide a clear framework for accountability, with objectives broadly aligned to PRU priorities. Arrangements to manage underperformance are supportive and well understood, balancing staff well-being with accountability well.

Management committee members bring suitable expertise and contribute meaningfully to key areas such as recruitment and building improvements. They provide a developing level of strategic oversight with growing awareness of the strengths and areas for development of the PRU. A few members have engaged in learning walks and pupil voice activities. However, overall, their role in self-evaluation is at an early stage of development.

Overall, financial leadership is secure and increasingly effective, with grant funding and the core budget used appropriately to support pupils' needs, improve staffing stability and strengthen the sustainability of the provision.

Additional information

The PRU's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern

The PRU's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern

The PRU has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and management committee manage the PRU's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the PRU and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, management committee, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the PRU's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their PRU
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the PRU 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 PRU to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the PRU's self-evaluation processes
- consider the PRU's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the PRU has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of PRU documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

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

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

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