

North Powys Pupil Referral Unit
The Pathway Education Centre
Old College
Off Station Road
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13/10/2026

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: September 2026

A team of inspectors recently visited North Powys Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), to consider how the PRU has progressed in addressing two of the priorities in its development plan.

North Powys PRU was established in March 2025. Previously, pupil referral provision operated as a single service across two sites, one in North Powys and one in South Powys. The current headteacher took up post in April 2026, and the deputy headteacher joined the PRU on 1 September 2026. This is the PRU's first interim visit.

The team would like to thank the staff and pupils at the PRU for their co-operation with this visit and for the warm welcome they received.

During the visit, the team had the opportunity to observe teaching and learning, look at pupils' work, scrutinise evidence and talk to pupils, staff, and leaders.

Below is a summary of progress against both recommendations.

Focus of visit

How effectively does the curriculum meet the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils?

- In the short time since their appointment, the Pupil Referral Unit's (PRU) senior leaders have brought energy, urgency and focus to their roles and to the PRU's operations overall. They have conducted appropriate self-evaluation, for example, scrutinising curriculum planning. As a result, they have identified important shortcomings in provision and have drawn up suitable plans to strengthen and develop the curriculum. However, these plans are in the very early stages of implementation, and it is too early to evaluate their impact.

- In the short time since their appointments, senior leaders have used pupil voice effectively to determine pupils' ambitions, interests and opinions regarding both their curriculum and their learning environment. As a result, they have built effective working relationships with pupils rapidly. Further, this clear prioritisation of pupil voice has had a beneficial effect on pupil well-being and attitudes to learning.
- Leaders are beginning to provide operational and strategic oversight of provision. They are developing systems to track, monitor and manage curriculum provision appropriately. As a result, the PRU is beginning to provide pupils with a bespoke curriculum which meets their needs and is responsive to their progress. Notably, this focus on individualised, responsive pathways for pupils is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil well-being.
- Personalised pathways, practical activities and enrichment opportunities are beginning to respond well to pupils' individual needs and motivate them to attend and engage in learning. The broad, experiential curriculum, including beneficial work placements, is beginning to support pupils' confidence, independence and preparation for adulthood.
- However, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherent or progressive. Schemes of work do not consistently set out how pupils build their knowledge, understanding and skills over time.
- In support of leaders' work to strengthen the PRU's curriculum provision, The Local Authority and leaders may wish to consider the following:
 - The PRU's current buildings and facilities place significant limits on the nature and scope of curriculum provision. For example, at KS4, there are currently no specialist facilities to enable delivery of specific accredited qualifications including science GCSE and vocational courses. Further, consideration should be given to the differing needs of primary and secondary pupils in regard to learning environment.
 - At present, there are limited opportunities for leaders to engage in professional learning addressing PRU-specific curriculum leadership

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How effectively are roles and responsibilities defined, understood and carried out across the PRU?

Strengths:

- Leaders have made important progress in clarifying senior leadership roles and responsibilities following a prolonged period of instability. The appointment of a substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher provides a clearer leadership structure and is beginning to improve continuity, communication and organisational stability across the PRU. However, as the headteacher only took up post in April 2026 and the deputy headteacher in September 2026, the impact of these arrangements is still at the early stage.
- Senior leaders have clearly allocated responsibility for several important aspects of the PRU's work. For example, the headteacher leads attendance, behaviour, curriculum and safeguarding, while the deputy headteacher has responsibility for ALN, safeguarding, literacy and curriculum. This provides staff with clearer lines of responsibility than previously and supports greater coherence in the leadership of key aspects of provision.
- Leaders are beginning to distribute responsibilities beyond the senior leadership team. A very few teachers have designated responsibilities for safeguarding and work experience, while teaching assistants have identified responsibilities for classroom support and interventions. This is beginning to broaden leadership capacity and make better use of staff expertise.
- Improved leadership arrangements are contributing positively to the day-to-day operation of the PRU. For example, clearer systems and expectations, strengthened communication and improved staff morale. These developments have contributed to a calmer and increasingly consistent culture, alongside improvements in pupil behaviour and engagement.
- Responsibilities for current improvement priorities are identified clearly within the school development plan (SDP). Priorities have named senior leaders, and individual actions identify responsible staff, timescales and intended milestones. This provides an increasingly useful framework through which leaders can establish accountability for improvement activity.
- Leaders are beginning to involve staff collectively in improvement work. For example, the development of the thematic curriculum and personalised pathways identifies

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responsibilities for all staff, while professional learning, monitoring and review activities are planned to support staff in carrying these responsibilities out more consistently.

- The improving clarity of staff responsibilities is supporting a strong relational culture. Nearly all pupils identify positive relationships with staff as a particularly strong feature of the PRU, and most feel able to approach adults for support. As a result, staff understand and carry out their pastoral responsibilities effectively in many aspects of their day-to-day work.

In support of their work to strengthen management and strategic direction of the PRU leaders may wish to consider the following:

- A considerable number of strategic responsibilities are concentrated between the two senior leaders. The headteacher currently holds responsibility for several substantial areas, including behaviour, attendance, curriculum and safeguarding, alongside her wider headteacher and local authority Area Behaviour Manager responsibilities. This may limit the extent to which leadership is genuinely distributed and create a risk that improvement work remains overly dependent on a small number of individuals.
- Accountability arrangements require further strengthening. Since the appointment of the leaders, monitoring has become more systematic, but the PRU's own self-evaluation recognises that it remains too focused on compliance rather than on evaluating impact. In addition, the management committee challenge and accountability require further development. Consequently, leaders cannot yet demonstrate consistently how effectively individuals discharge their responsibilities or the difference their work makes to pupils.

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The PRU's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<https://estyn.gov.wales/provider/6661103>

Yours sincerely



Dyfrig Ellis

Assistant Director

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