



Report summary for parents and carers on Carmarthen Secondary Teaching and Learning Centre

Date of inspection: December 2023

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

Summary

Most pupils who attend the PRU have experienced significant interruption to their education, which negatively impacts their attendance and engagement with learning. During their time at the PRU, many pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. A few pupils make exceptional progress in relation to their learning and behaviour. However, the number of pupils attending the PRU on a full-time basis is too low. Leadership provides a safe, nurturing learning environment with oversight of a suitable curriculum offer. The curriculum is successfully underpinned by therapeutic approaches to support progress in pupils' learning, behaviour, and emotional needs.

Main evaluation

Senior leaders have suitable arrangements in place to ensure the smooth running of the PRU. The PRU provides a safe and nurturing environment where most pupils are respectful of staff, visitors, and each other. Many pupils develop a strong understanding of their rights and how they can influence their learning at the PRU. Most pupils develop strong trusting working relationships with staff where they feel listened to.

Leaders and staff promote a strong safeguarding culture at the PRU. Staff know their roles and responsibilities well. Nearly all pupils feel safe and know who they can go to if they have concerns. Training for staff to maintain a high level of knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding processes at the PRU is firmly in place.

Senior leaders are visible around the two sites. They know and understand the needs of their pupils well and provide valuable support for staff. They work well together to provide direction for the PRU. As a result, leadership has a beneficial impact on important aspects of the PRU's work, such as pupils' behaviour and well-being.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities, including for middle leaders across the PRU, is underdeveloped. The current structure and lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities significantly limits the capacity of the head of centre to focus strategically on improving key areas for development.

Overall, across the PRU, teachers plan suitably to develop and apply pupils' skills across the curriculum in a range of purposeful contexts. Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their oracy skills. Leaders have recently introduced a range of useful strategies to improve pupils' reading skills. These strategies are at the early stages of development. A majority of pupils develop their reading skills appropriately. Generally, pupils develop and apply their writing skills suitably across the curriculum.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing and applying their numeracy skills. A few pupils use word processing effectively. However, due to a lack of resources, opportunities to develop pupils' digital skills are limited. As a result, pupils' digital skills are generally underdeveloped.

Many pupils communicate confidently with adults and peers. They generally listen well to adults and to each other. Many older pupils talk confidently in lessons about what they are learning and ask relevant questions. Teachers provide suitable opportunities to develop pupils' thinking and

problem solving skills. There are also appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their creative skills across the curriculum.

Where learning is more experiential and practical, most pupils display suitable levels of independence in their learning. However, many pupils remain reliant on staff support to direct their formal learning and do not display independent learning skills at an age-appropriate level in these lessons.

Many pupils, relative to their needs and abilities, exhibit positive behaviour in lessons and around the PRU. Leaders have a useful behaviour tracking system to evaluate pupils' behaviour and to identify and share well with the wider staff the triggers and trends which require targeted intervention.

The PRU sets firm and consistent boundaries on the expectations of all pupils during their time onsite.

On entry to the PRU each morning, pupils arrive for a well-being check with the opportunity to talk with staff and each other and have breakfast. During this time pupils hand in their mobile devices until the end of the day. All pupils follow this procedure without incident. As a result, pupils are ready to learn. This is a strength of the PRU.

Most pupils arrive at the PRU with negative attitudes towards themselves as learners. However, during their time at the PRU, many of these pupils greatly improve their attitudes to learning. They develop resilience and strategies to manage negative feelings well. As a result, many pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. A few pupils make exceptional progress in relation to their learning and behaviour.

A majority of pupils who attend the PRU have experienced long periods of time out of formal education. The PRU uses the information it has on pupils and works with parents, carers and other agencies effectively to determine the most appropriate action and provision to support the aspiration of full-time attendance. As a result, the PRU offers a range of helpful approaches to initially re-engage pupils in learning using a well-planned graduated approach. However, although the aim of the PRU is for all pupils to attend on a full-time basis, a majority of pupils across the PRU attend on a part-time basis, and a few attend for less than half the week. Pastoral support plans (PSPs) are generally suitable to meet the needs of pupils. However, they do not focus well enough on improving pupils' return to full-time attendance. The PRU holds regular reviews of pupils' PSPs. However, the number of pupils attending the PRU on a full-time basis is too low.

The breadth and balance of the curriculum offer is appropriate across the PRU. For older secondary aged pupils, the range of qualification pathways reflects well the needs, abilities, and interests of the pupils.

The health and well-being curriculum offer for all pupils is strong.

Pupils experience a wide range of learning activities that help to develop their social and emotional skills and understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles. For example, all pupils have contributed to the development of a healthy eating charter setting onsite limits on caffeine and sugar content in drinks. Similarly, incidents of pupils vaping on site have significantly reduced.

Pupil intervention work based on trauma informed practice underpins the curriculum offer and is a strength of the PRU. Nearly all staff are skilled in its delivery. Staff work well with external agencies where appropriate and provide a holistic approach for the individual pupil learning offer. This supports the progress pupils make during their time at the PRU well. The PRU also offers a range of useful intervention programmes that assist pupils in developing their basic literacy, numeracy, emotional health, and social skills.

Leaders use an appropriate range of strategies to gather evidence about the PRU to improve the quality of the provision. Overall, these activities provide leaders with a worthwhile overview of the PRU's work and help to identify priorities for improvement in its development plan. However, evaluations of progress do not always focus well enough on how the PRU's actions will drive improvements.

Most lessons are taught by subject specialists who have a strong understanding of the emotional and behavioural needs of pupils. They plan lessons that engage pupils and cater suitably for the pupils' learning and emotional needs. In most lessons for older pupils, teachers have high expectations, including effective challenge and pace, and pupils are encouraged to consider and understand their own strengths and areas for development.

Leaders make appropriate use of funding to improve the learning environment. For example, they have established a hair dressing station to deliver qualifications in hair and beauty and a sensory room to support pupils to self-regulate, and to manage anger, over-stimulation, and stress. Many teachers use a wide range of appropriate resources to support pupils' learning. However, resources are too limited for the sensory curriculum offer. In addition, the environment does not generally meet the needs of most pupils across both sites. For example, outdoor learning areas are restricted and poorly resourced.

Many staff are skilled in their use of questioning techniques to provide challenge and to support and develop pupils' engagement. Their use of trauma informed approaches supports staff to gauge effectively how well pupils are coping during lessons. As a result, staff successfully diffuse potential behavioural challenges and support building resilience and positive attitudes to learning for pupils well.

Most teachers show strong understanding of the specific additional learning needs of each pupil and cater for this in their planning and deployment of support staff. However, approaches to meet the sensory needs of the growing cohort of pupils with a diagnosis of autism are at an early stage of development.

The PRU has an appropriate baseline of pupil attainment and well-being information on entry. Staff use this information well to develop suitable learning plans and to set appropriate targets for literacy, numeracy, well-being, and behaviour. Processes to track and monitor individual pupil progress in achieving their targets are developing well. However, strategic approaches to evaluate pupil progress and the impact of interventions are at an early stage of development. As a result, this impacts on the effectiveness of leaders to robustly plan for improvement across the PRU.

Most pupils leave the PRU with nationally accredited qualifications in courses related to their needs and individual interests. In addition to the support offered by staff at the PRU, Year 11 pupils have recently benefited from useful careers advice and guidance from an external careers advisor. Nearly all leavers in 2023 moved on to education, training, or employment.

Overall, there has been a reduction in fixed term exclusions for the past academic year. However, analysis of exclusion data is limited.

Across the PRU, the use of restrictive physical interventions is low. However, the record keeping of incidents is inconsistent across the two sites.

Staff across the PRU are mindful that many of the pupils are disadvantaged by poverty and the impact this may have on their learning. There is a strong culture of equity of learning, behaviour, and well-being experiences for all pupils across both sites. The PRU has well-established links with an appropriate range of external agencies. This multi-agency working supports a joined-up approach to supporting pupils and their families well.

Leaders and staff have strong working relationships with families.

The PRU runs a number of events for families to attend, for example, Christmas fayres, Spring plant sales, and open afternoons. The PRU has key staff available during these events to support families with issues they may be facing, for example challenges around sleep, understanding autism and financial concerns.

Reports to parents about their child's progress are suitable. Leaders develop useful links with the community, such as providing bat roosting boxes to a local community project. As a result, the PRU's reputation and involvement in the community are valued.

Leaders promote and support the professional learning of all staff effectively. Support staff are appropriately trained and integral to the planning and delivery of the curriculum offer for all pupils. Leaders plan for national priorities suitably and are making appropriate progress in implementing the additional learning needs reform and the Curriculum for Wales, although rates of attendance remain an issue.

Overall, the management committee discharge their required roles and responsibilities suitably. They contribute appropriately to the setting of the PRU's strategic priorities and have a suitable understanding of the PRU's strengths and areas for development. Members provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. However, their understanding of the specialist context of the PRU is limited.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve attendance
- R2 Work with the local authority to improve the quality of the learning environment
- R3 Clarify the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders
- R2 Strengthen systems for assessment, tracking, self-evaluation, and improvement planning

Statutory compliance

Safeguarding arrangements

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

Healthy eating and drinking

The PRU has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

School finances

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

Health and safety (site security)

The PRU's arrangements for site security was a cause for concern which has been brought to the attention of the local authority.

What happens next?

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

PRU context

Name of provider	Carmarthen Secondary Teaching and Learning Centre
Local authority	Carmarthenshire Council Council
Language of the provider	English
Multi-site provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	76
Pupils of statutory school age	76
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2015
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023
<p>Carmarthenshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Centre includes Canolfan Y Gors satellite provision. It is one of three PRUs registered in Carmarthenshire local authority. Each site follows local authority criteria for admission. Burry Port site has pupils aged 11-16 years. Pupils at this site predominantly have been or are at risk of permanent exclusion. Pupils typically show outwardly challenging behaviours, which may stem from mental health and/or learning needs and trauma.</p> <p>Pupils who access the Canolfan Y Gors site are aged 11-16 and are all under Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provision. Pupils typically may self-harm, have anxiety and can have introverted behaviours and learning needs.</p> <p>The Burry Port site is at capacity. There 42 pupils with a further two transitioning into the PRU. There are 30 younger and 14 older secondary school-aged pupils. Canolfan Y Gors is also at capacity with 32 pupils on roll. There are 12 younger and 20 older secondary school-aged pupils. All pupils are dual registered to the PRU and their mainstream school. There has been an increase in the number of pupils attending both sites with a diagnosis of autism over the last few years.</p> <p>Attendance is 60%. Of the 76 pupils, all have additional learning needs, 59% are eFSM with a three-year rolling average of 51.90%. Five pupils have 'children looked after' status. There are no pupils with English as an additional language.</p> <p>The centre manager has been in post since 2022.</p>	

© Crown Copyright 2024: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 08/02/2024

Please note that the photographs displayed may not be of the school that is the subject of this report.