



Report summary for parents and carers on Powys Pupil Referral Unit

Date of inspection: May 2024

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

Overview

Over time, many pupils make appropriate progress from their initial starting points. Many pupils join the PRU following periods of disruption to their education. Many pupils settle in well, build constructive and trusting relationships with their staff and peers and engage well with their learning. For these pupils, this represents strong progress. However, attendance issues impact on the rate of progress of a minority of pupils across the PRU.

In most lessons, pupils develop their social and communication skills successfully. Many pupils develop their reading suitably and in line with their ability. Similarly, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Many pupils develop their mathematical skills successfully. As pupils move through the PRU, they develop a comprehensive range of digital skills. Nearly all older pupils achieve an appropriate range of accreditation in core subjects.

Teaching is strong across the PRU. Staff in the PRU know their pupils' needs well and create a calm learning environment. Staff manage pupil behaviour well. In many cases, learning meets pupils' individual needs effectively.

The PRU provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of most pupils. There is a range of suitable qualification pathways in place, which allow older pupils to achieve well. The PRU supports individual pupils in experiencing a narrow range of vocational courses at the local college. However, this is not an established part of the curriculum offer at the PRU for all pupils.

The curriculum at the PRU offers valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of their 'cynffin'. However, the planning and tracking of progressive skill development across the PRU are inconsistent. For example, the curriculum offer for the progressive development of Welsh language at the PRU is underdeveloped.

Many pupils have been identified as having an additional learning need and have either a statutory individual development plan (IDP) or a statement of special educational needs. The systematic tracking of the progress that pupils make in relation to their IDP targets is at the very early stages of development.

Staff at the PRU support pupils on an individual basis in planning their next stage of learning. This includes advising on and supporting appropriate applications to further education and/or work experience placements. However, the use of work experience is not a well-established feature across the PRU.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the PRU. The PRU's safeguarding guidelines and procedures are comprehensive, and all staff know their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe whilst at the PRU.

The local authority does not have a clear strategic vision or improvement plan for the PRU. As a result, leaders at the PRU are unclear of their roles and contribution within the local authority to support pupils accessing education other than at school (EOTAS).

Leadership arrangements differ across the two sites. At the Newtown site, there has been considerable change to the senior leadership team for a significant period of time. This negatively impacts the ability of leaders to effectively plan for improvement, provide sustained support for staff and establish processes and systems at this site.

Across both sites self-evaluation processes require strengthening. The strategic tracking and purposeful analysis of data is underdeveloped. This limits leaders' ability to make robust decisions when identifying areas for improvement.

The role of the management committee requires strengthening. Whilst members are supportive, their role to effectively challenge leaders to improve is underdeveloped. As a result, they are not adequately holding leaders to account.

“Cynefin” is a Welsh term defined by Curriculum for Wales as 'the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable.

Recommendations

- R1 Leaders work with the local authority to establish a strategic vision for the PRU
- R2 Stabilise and clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders at the PRU
- R3 Improve quality assurance procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning across the PRU
- R4 Improve attendance

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this PRU is in need of significant improvement. The PRU will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. A small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the PRU to monitor progress about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report.

School context

Name of provider	Powys Pupil Referral Unit
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
Residential provision?	No
Multi-site provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	33
Pupils of statutory school age	33
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2016
Start date of inspection	20/05/2024
<p>Following the de-registration of two pupil referral units in the county, Powys Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was established in December 2014. It provides education for up to 60 pupils from 7 to 16 years old. Currently, there are 33 pupils on the roll across the primary and secondary age range.</p> <p>The PRU has two sites, one in Newtown and the other in Brecon. Pupils who attend Powys Pupil Referral Unit have a range of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. The PRU caters for pupils who have either been permanently excluded from schools in Powys, or who are at risk of exclusion. The PRU also delivers medical tuition services and provides behaviour outreach to local schools.</p> <p>There are very few pupils who come from ethnic minority backgrounds and no pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Just over half of the pupils are dual registered with a mainstream school. Six pupils currently have a part-time timetable and pastoral support plan in place. A very few pupils have returned to full-time mainstream education over the last three years. Just under half of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A very few pupils are known to be young carers and a very few pupils are in the care of the local authority. Most pupils are identified as having additional learning needs.</p>	

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