

Sector summary

Pupil referral units

2022-2023



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Teaching and learning

What's going well

- Well-being underpins the curriculum offer to address the continuing need to support pupils' increasing emotional well-being and mental health needs.
- The health and well-being curriculum in two of the four PRUs is developing suitably.
- Where practice is effective, staff planning is highly effective and takes account of a range of purposeful assessment information. This supports pupils to make progress from their initial starting points.

What needs to improve

- A majority of pupils make adequate progress from their initial starting points.
- For a majority of pupils, low attendance impacts negatively on their progress.
- The quality and impact of the development of Curriculum for Wales are highly variable.
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum offer, for primary and younger secondary-aged pupils, are inconsistent.
- The development of skills across the curriculum is under-developed.

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Care, support and well-being

What's going well

- Overall, the positive working relationship staff establish with pupils continues to be a strong feature in PRUs.
- Generally, pupils say they feel safe, secure, and well cared for when they are at a PRU.
- PRUs continue to establish a nurturing ethos to support pupils' emotional needs well.
- Person-centred approaches contribute effectively to pupils' well-being, engagement, and personal development.
- Arrangements to promote and develop positive behaviours with pupils are clear. In all PRUs, staff develop a strong trusting working relationship with pupils.
- Communication with parents and carers is strong in PRUs. Staff offer flexibility in approaches to develop positive communication links with parents and carers, which suit the needs of families.
- Partnership working with a range of external agencies is effective. This strengthens joined-up service provision for many pupils and families.

What needs to improve

- There is too much variability in opportunities for pupils to express their views and influence the way they learn.
- Processes to address low pupil attendance are inconsistent.
- There is inconsistent use of pastoral support programmes (PSPs) and too many pupils access part-time education for too long.
- Too few pupils access mainstream schools as part of a planned reintegration process. As a result, very few pupils return to mainstream education. This in turn delays opportunities for other pupils to access PRU placements for support.
- In three PRUs, processes to track and monitor pupil progress are underdeveloped.
- Processes to identify and set individual pupil targets are variable.

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Leading and improving

What's going well

- In the most effective practice, leaders plan strategically for improvement. Self-evaluation processes are well established and involve staff and pupils.
- In the most effective practice, leaders have a precise understanding of staff strengths and provide relevant and regular opportunities for staff to develop their skills. Leaders support staff to develop as reflective practitioners well.

What needs to improve

- Self-evaluation processes in three of the PRUs are under-developed. As a result, leaders are unable to plan for improvement robustly enough.
- The range and quality of professional learning opportunities are too variable.
- In many PRUs, the role of the management committee requires strengthening. They do not quality assure the work of the PRU well enough.
- The role of the school improvement partner to support curriculum development is inconsistent.

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Overview of recommendations from inspections

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Four PRUs were inspected in 2022-2023

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In three PRUs, improvement in strategic leadership was identified as an area for improvement. This included improving self-evaluation processes to better inform improvement planning.

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In three PRUs, attendance was identified as requiring improvement. This included strengthening procedures for monitoring attendance as well as improving pupil attendance rates.

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In three PRUs, a recommendation identified the need to provide a broad and balanced curriculum offer. In one of the three PRUs, this specifically identified the need to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum.

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In three PRUs, there was a recommendation to strengthen the quality assurance role of the management committee. In two of the three PRUs, this also included the role of the local authority and school improvement service.

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Reflective questions

Questions to help PRUs **reflect on attendance**:

- How well does the PRU use the pupil information shared prior to pupils' entry to consider attendance? Does information include prior interventions to improve attendance and any external agency involvement to allow PRUs to plan for improvement?
- Where there are significant concerns for a pupil's attendance, how effectively is the information shared with the local authority or referred to local authority panel for additional support?
- How robust are processes for monitoring and analysing pupil attendance and trends? How well are attendance codes monitored?
- How well do external agencies support the work of the PRU to improve pupil attendance?
- How well does the local authority and management committee monitor attendance across the PRU?
- How well does the local authority and management committee monitor the use of part-time education and pastoral support programmes (PSPs)?
- How effective are arrangements to address attendance issues, particularly for pupils with persistent absenteeism?
- How effective are opportunities for the sharing of good practice for improving pupil attendance with other similar provisions?
- How well does the curriculum offer promote better attendance?
- How effective are processes to support parents/carers to address attendance concerns? What could be improved? For example, does the PRU explore reasons why parents/carers think their child may not be attending?
- How well are arrangements for pupils to access part-time education used and monitored? (How many pupils access part-time education? On average how long do pupils access part-time education? Who is this agreed with? How frequently are these plans reviewed? Is there an agreed plan in place shared with the parents/carers and pupils to increase access to education?)
- Where pupils have dual placement with a mainstream school, how well are attendance rates monitored? How well does the PRU work with mainstream schools to address any attendance issues?
- How well are PSPs used? How effective are they and how does the PRU know? (Who are they agreed with? Who are they shared with? Is there an agreed plan of action, including a clear timeframe to return pupils to full-time access to education?)
- How well do pupils understand the importance of attending regularly?
- How well are pupils involved in discussions around their attendance? (How often? What is the impact of any discussions? What do pupils say about why they do not attend the PRU? Can they make suggestions on what would help them attend more regularly?)

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Effective practice

To read about individual providers that are working effectively in specific aspects of their work, visit our [effective practice summary page for 2022-2023](#)